



## MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Celinda Lake, David Mermin, John Norris; *Lake Research Partners*  
Brian Nienaber, Ashlee Rich; *The Tarrance Group*

Re: Election week survey on Public Funding of elections<sup>1</sup>

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Election week polling of likely voters shows overwhelming support for a system of voluntary public financing of elections that includes a ban on lobbyist contributions and accepting only small contributions. This support is backed by a widespread belief we need to change the way elections are financed.

Voters also strongly agree that large campaign contributions from the financial industry and lobbyists helped create the current financial crisis and are a major impediment to making progress on major issues like the economy, health care, and rising energy costs.

### Key Highlights

Voters support a proposal for publicly funding elections that includes a ban on lobbyist contributions and accepting only small contributions by over a 5-to-1 ratio. The proposal is supported by 69% of voters, with just 13% opposed and 18% undecided.<sup>2</sup>

Every major demographic group favors the proposal with at least two-thirds supporting. Support remains high across:

- Gender (71% for men, 67% for women),
- Education (66% for non-college graduates, 73% for college graduates),
- Age (68% for younger voters, 71% for older voters),

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners and the Tarrance Group conducted this bipartisan survey of 1,000 likely voters nationwide, with an oversample of 200 cell phone interviews among likely voters, conducted November 3-5, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Text of proposal: Under this plan, candidates who agree to a ban on lobbyist contributions and to accept only small contributions from individuals would get limited public funds to match those small contributions. There would be strict enforcement and accountability, with published reports open to the public

- Region (69% in the Northeast and Midwest, 70% in the South, and 66% in the West),
- Party (69% for Democrats, 72% for Republicans, and 60% for independents).

The mandate for “change” extends to the way elections are financed. Over two-thirds of voters (69%) believe we need changes to the way elections are financed.

A strong majority of voters tie the large campaign contributions to the most pressing economic issues facing Congress. Over three-fourths of voters agree with the statement “I am worried that large political contributions will prevent Congress from tackling the important issues facing America today, like the economic crisis, rising energy costs, reforming health care, and global warming” (77% agree).

A strong majority also see large contributions as a major factor in the recent financial mess. Over two-thirds of voters agree with the statement: “Large campaign contributions from the banking industry to members of Congress have resulted in lax oversight and have been a major factor in causing the current financial crisis on Wall Street” (70% agree).

- Union households, seniors, and voters most concerned about the economy show even stronger agreement on both of these statements.

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*For more information on this Lake Research Partners’ survey, contact Celinda Lake in our Washington DC office at 202-776-9066 or David Mermin in our California office at 510-286-2097.*