



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF NORTH CAROLINA  
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

*Legislative Update for May 28, 2008*

**VOTER OWNED ELECTIONS IN CHAPEL HILL**

Chapel Hill is the first municipality in North Carolina to receive authorization from the NC General Assembly to enact a public campaign financing program for Town municipal elections. In the 2007 session, the General Assembly enacted a law (HB483) entitled “An Act to Define a Uniform Program of Public Campaign Financing and to Authorize the Town of Chapel Hill to Conduct Such a Program.” This act added a local government (Chapel Hill) to the other two areas authorized to use public financing: judicial and selected Council of State offices.

A Chapel Hill Town Council Committee recommended establishing the program beginning with the fall 2009 elections. The Council held a Public Hearing on the proposal on May 14, 2008. Vicki Boyer, President of the Orange/Durham/Chatham League of Women Voter spoke in favor of the proposal at the Public Hearing.

The Chapel Hill Town Attorney explained the following:

“A Voter Owned Election is a comprehensive system that provides candidates a voluntary option for a new way to run for office. Under the proposed program, candidates agree to:

- Collect a large number of \$5 to \$20 qualifying contributions to demonstrate community support
- Limit campaign spending
- Agree to comply with strict administrative rules

In return, participating candidates would receive limited amounts of campaign dollars from a publicly financed fund for use only for allowed campaign expenses.”

“Candidates would be required to demonstrate a level of support from the public by collecting an established number of qualifying contributions (\$750 from at least 75 contributors if they are running for Council and \$1,500 from at least 150 contributors if they are running for mayor).

Public grants for qualified candidates would be \$3,000 for those running for Council and \$9,000 for Mayoral candidates. Candidates choosing to participate in the program would be required to raise no more than \$2,250 if they are running for Council, and no more than \$4,500 if they are running for Mayor.”

At the end of the Public Hearing on May 14, the Chapel Hill Town Council referred the comments received to the Manager and Attorney. The Council will consider this program for possible enactment at its June 9, 2008 business meeting.

You may recall that the Town of Cary used public financing in a local government election a few years ago. This action was not authorized by the State, and thus encountered legal difficulties.

If Chapel Hill operates a successful public financing program for local elections, other local governments may want to follow suit.

**The League of Women Voters of North Carolina works with many other organizations to advocate for our programs. Following is a list of the League's main coalition partners:**

**LWVNC  
Memberships and Coalition Partners**

**Election, Voting and Good Government Issues:**

- \*NC Voters for Clean Elections – [www.ncvce.org](http://www.ncvce.org) (coalition)
- Common Cause – [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)
- Democracy NC – [www.democracy-nc.org](http://www.democracy-nc.org)
- NC Center for Voter Education – [www.ncvotered.com](http://www.ncvotered.com)
- NC Fair Share – <http://ncfairshare.org/>
- NC Coalition for Lobby Reform - [www.nclobbyreform.org](http://www.nclobbyreform.org) (coalition)
- \*Open Government Coalition – [www.ncopengov.org](http://www.ncopengov.org) (coalition)
- Blueprint NC – [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org) (coalition)

**Tax and Budget Issues:**

- North Carolina Justice Center – [www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org) (operates the NC Budget and Tax Center)

**Health Care Issues**

- NC Justice Center – [www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org) (operates the North Carolina Health Access Coalition)
- Health Care for All North Carolinians – [www.healthcareforallnc.org](http://www.healthcareforallnc.org)

**Death Penalty Moratorium:**

- NC Coalition for a Moratorium (on the Death Penalty) – [www.ncmoratorium.org](http://www.ncmoratorium.org)

**Environmental Issues**

- \*NC Conservation Network - [www.ncconservationnetwork.org](http://www.ncconservationnetwork.org) (coalition)

**Women's Issues**

- \*NC Women United ([www.ncwu.org](http://www.ncwu.org)) (coalition)

**Aging Issues**

- \*Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Health and Human Services – [www.ncdhhs.gov/aging](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging)

**General**

- \*NC Center for Nonprofits – [www.ncnonprofits.org](http://www.ncnonprofits.org)

\* indicates that LWVNC pays dues