

Small Donor Match Program

Toplines

- The match program would be new to the state of Minnesota, based upon a model used in other states and municipalities.
- The program was designed to allow candidates to run and win on it.
- Small dollar matching programs incentivize in-district and in-state donations to candidates and increase the diversity of candidates' donor-pools and increase involvement in the political process.
- The small donor matching program is an urgent and overdue modernization of our current system of public financing.

How it works

- Matching fund programs match small contributions to qualifying candidates with public funds, according to a specified ratio. The goal is to amplify the voices of regular voters by incentivizing candidates to seek donations from a broad base of constituents rather than a few wealthy donors.
- In the current bill language, small dollar donations of up to \$50 are matched by the State at a 4:1 rate for in-district donations (so that a \$50 private donation is worth \$250 in total) and a 2:1 rate for contributions from Minnesotans who do not live in the district (so that a \$50 private donation is worth \$150 in total).
- Matching funds to each participating candidate is capped at 50% of total spending limits, so half of the candidate's campaign can be publicly funded, the other half still relies on other sources.
- Candidates have to agree to abide by the state match agreement (10A.322, 10A.323, 10A.324) related to spending limits, prohibitions on contributions for certain types of contributors, return of unspent matching funds, and campaign finance board filing guidelines.

Why it's right for Minnesota

- The small donor match program would empower everyday voters/citizens/Minnesotans by amplifying their small contributions to participating candidates with public funds.
- Small donor matching is an antidote to big money politics, and the single most effective way to respond to *Citizens United* and other court cases that have swept aside campaign finance safeguards.
- Small donor matching would allow legislators to spend less time dialing for dollars and more time connecting with voters.
- While fundraising, it incentivizes candidates to seek out many non wealthy supporters that are more representative of our districts, not just a few big donors.
- It would bolster the diversity of donors, officeholders, and candidates and amplify the voices of regular people.

Success Metrics:

- **New York State:** After years of success in New York City, the newly implemented statewide small donor match program is set to increase small donor impact sixfold compared to their share without the matching program in the 2022 election. Considering New York's 2022 legislative elections, small donors of \$250 or less accounted for only 11% of all candidate funding with the bulk of the money coming from donors in the \$1,000+ range or entities like PACs, corporations, and unions, the jump from 11% to 67% is significant ([Brennan Center](#)).
- **Montgomery County, Maryland:** Data from their 2018 program concludes that 1) candidates who qualified for the matching program raised 98% of their money in small contributions and matching funds compared to the 3% for candidates who didn't participate, 2) the average donation was dramatically smaller for qualifying candidates allowing them to diversify their donor base, 3) individual donors participated at a higher rate when candidates participated in the small dollar program (those that participated received 96% more contributions than those who didn't), and 4) candidates running were able to use the small donor system to run competitive races – the average contributions for candidates participating in the program was similar to the average contribution for candidates seeking out larger contributions ([Maryland PIRG](#)).

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