

WEBVTT

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00:00:08.100 --> 00:00:13.680

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): Hi, everybody welcome. We will be starting momentarily. We're just gonna let people

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00:00:13.720 --> 00:00:16.730

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): zoom in to the zoom room.

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00:00:35.980 --> 00:00:49.680

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): Okay? Hello, everyone. My name is Jackson Upiers, and I am a senior associate of public engagement at Spur. Thank you so much for joining us for this digital discourse today. Many of you here today are spur members. Thank you so much for your support.

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00:00:49.680 --> 00:01:14.260

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): If you're not a member, I encourage you to join to support Spurs ongoing work and using education, policy, analysis, and advocacy to make our cities and reach in more prosperous, sustainable, and equitable places to live. Your financial support enables us to continue our work, including the hosting of programs like today's, you'll find more information about membership on line. As for a Don Martin Sash join, i'd also like to think the League of Women, voters of Oakland for co-presenting Today's event.

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00:01:15.170 --> 00:01:34.900

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): Our next forum is scheduled for this evening at 5 Pm. It is titled common ground, remaking the ground floor, so join us for the release of common ground project for the post Retail city, we making the ground floor with the authors what we'll host a conversation about the research case, Studies and design proposals explored in the studio 250.

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00:01:34.900 --> 00:01:44.630

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): I will also interrogate the future of the ground floor and social infrastructure, and what actual policies, practices, and partnerships could work toward a new common ground.

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00:01:44.960 --> 00:01:47.840

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): And today's personal discourse and the reason you all are. Here

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00:01:48.160 --> 00:02:01.520

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): is democracy dollars creating a more democratic system in Oakland. So today's panel discussion will explore the origins of democracy dollars and its goal to equitably involve all residents in the political process.

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00:02:01.630 --> 00:02:22.640

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): Today's form will be moderated by Gail Wallace Gail has a background as a commercial litigator and a teacher. When she joined the League in 2,017. She found the natural fit on the League's Advocacy Team and I since become the League's Vice President of advocacy. While the League Doesn't support candidates or political parties, it does advocate on issues like campaign finance.

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00:02:22.640 --> 00:02:35.690

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): Gail has been the leads liaison with the Bay area political Equality collective which championed the Fair Elections Act last November. and with that Gail, I will pass it over to you to introduce our panelists today.

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00:02:36.370 --> 00:02:39.580

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Thank you very much, Jackson, and thank you.

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00:02:39.850 --> 00:02:56.530

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Members of the Zoom audience today for taking the time to join us. The League has been a long-standing member of the coalition which has played such a large role in developing the Fair Elections Act. And so we're very happy to be co-sponsoring this event with spur.

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I want to begin by introducing our panelists and making a a few brief remarks about the Fair Elections Act.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: I'm gonna introduce people in the order. They'll be speaking to you. So we'll start with Jonathan Meta Stein, who is a civil rights attorney and Democracy reform advocate.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Jonathan became the executive director of California, common cause in 2,020.

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00:03:21.590 --> 00:03:37.380

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Before that he served as head of the voting rights and census program at the Asian Law caucus and as a voting Rights Staff attorney for the Aclu of California. He is a former chair of the Oakland Public Ethics Commission.

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00:03:38.440 --> 00:03:46.710

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Ryan Mittick is the current chair of the Public Ethics Commission, where he has served since 2,021.

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00:03:46.790 --> 00:03:52.920

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Ryan also operates a political research and communications consulting practice.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Our third panelist, Wayne Barnett, has been the Executive Director of Seattle's Ethics and Elections Commission for almost 20 years.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and was named 2,014 public employee of the year by the Municipal League of King County.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: He is a native of Michigan, and holds a law degree from the New York University School of Law.

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00:04:18.290 --> 00:04:35.360

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: In addition to these panelists, we're joined by Suzanne Duran, who will be available during the Q. A portion of our presentation today. Suzanne joined the Public's Ethics Commission as a lead analyst in 2,016.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: That was after 2 decades of work with local government labor organizations and nonprofits. For the past year she has served as the acting executive director of the Pec.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Let me just set the stage a bit for our presenters by reminding us all that

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Oakland voters made the Fair Elections Act Law last November, with support from more than 70% of the voters.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Among other provisions, the fair Elections acts, calls for distributing to eligible Oakland residents, \$100 in vouchers, which residents can then contribute to candidates of their choice.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: It is these 4 vouchers of \$25 each that are known as democracy dollars. The Public Ethics Commission is responsible for administering the program and has significant discretion

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: in shaping and staging different aspects of the program.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Yeah, we always want to answer the why question. And so I wanted to address the fact that the Fair Elections Act is a response to problems with campaign financing in Oakland

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: in the nutshell. The problems are that very few residents in Oakland contribute to political campaigns.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and those few who do tend to be very unrepresentative of Oakland's socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: As a result, any candidates looking for funding tend to be talking exclusively or primarily to a small and unrepresentative segment of Oaklanders

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Democracy dollars are a response to that. They're designed to give all eligible Oakland residents the means to support candidates. and by doing that this form of public financing, encourages candidates for public office

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00:06:31.780 --> 00:06:54.460

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: who may not have connections to large donors, and it motivates all candidates to engage with residents across the city to obtain their support. It hopefully contributes to increasing engagement on the part of Oakland residents who will have both the motivation and the means to contribute to candidates to campaign for their candidates and then to vote for them.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Okay, Jonathan, I hope that laid the table for you, and looking forward to your remarks.

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00:07:00.920 --> 00:07:27.700

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Thank you, Gail, and thank you. Everyone. Thank you. Spur for putting this on. It's a pleasure to be on this panel with wonderful colleagues and and co-panelists. Thank you to everyone who's out there today who wants to learn more about democracy dollars. It is really it. It may sound like one city's modest program, but in reality I think it tries to solve some of the biggest problems facing our democracy. But in an Oakland microcosm.

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: So let's talk about what those problems are. First, we have a campaign financing system in the city of Oakland that is

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: wildly disproportionate. As Gail sort of it started to mention about 50. Our data showed that about 50% of money raised by open candidates comes from outside of the city.

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00:07:46.360 --> 00:07:52.650

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and then more than 80% of the money raised by Oakland candidates from Oakland residents. That is, the money that comes from inside the city

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: comes from less than 1% of the city's residents, and that one. Those donors are clustered very, very significantly in the hills and in downtown.

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: And so you have, in a way, a city with very significant income inequality that has replicated that as political inequality with some people very, very much listen to, and some people very, very much not listen to.

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00:08:13.480 --> 00:08:31.620

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: And then simultaneously you have a different problem within our democracy at the the state and local levels, which is that California has made tremendous advancements in passing voting rights legislation over the last decade to make it easier to register a vote and vote, including automatic motor registration, same day, voter, registration, universal access to open mail balance, and more.

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and yet we have deep and persistent voter participation disparities in this State and in our city that will not go away, no matter what bills we pass with voters of color, and young voters casting their ballots a significantly lower rates than the rest of the Elector.

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00:08:47.030 --> 00:08:58.980

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: So what will it actually take to build an inclusive electorate and a representative democracy. We have to convince folks for whom it is now easier to vote that is actually worth their time and attention to do so.

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00:08:59.240 --> 00:09:05.610

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: And that means building a democracy that actually cares about what regular people think. And it's focused on solving their problems

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00:09:05.960 --> 00:09:12.450

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: that implicates gerrymandering and redistricting. It means ethics and pay to play, and important it means campaign, finance or form.

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00:09:12.540 --> 00:09:25.030

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: As long as people feel like the outcomes of our political system are decided at the outset because of the weight. Wealthy campaign donors and special interests can access can buy access and influence. There's just not a lot of point in casting your ballot.

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00:09:25.610 --> 00:09:36.380

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and for a long, long time reformers tried to solve that problem by doing the following: If this is the political speech of of millionaires and and and special interest. And this is the political speech of you and me.

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00:09:36.470 --> 00:09:56.360

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Performers for many decades tried to do this. They tried to push down on the political speech of of those with wealth and access and and power. The current Supreme Court has made clear essentially that doing so is in impermissible for cement violation. It violates the first amendment, political speech, rights of campaign dollars.

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: And so

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: we, as reformers, have turned to doing this, lifting up the voices of regular folks and everyday communities that are often left out of our democracy. So Gail mentioned it a little bit. But the Democracy dollars program. That Oakland passed with 74% of the vote is a massive step forward to solving both the campaign finance problem I mentioned, and the over apathy problem that I mentioned.

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00:10:21.390 --> 00:10:35.860

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: It is meant to be sending for \$25 democracy to all routers to every household. It is trying to turn every household into a donor household. If you are running a local campaign under the current system, you are triaging super hard all the time.

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00:10:35.870 --> 00:10:39.270

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: You have limited resources, limited Staff Limited time.

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00:10:39.340 --> 00:10:42.770

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: You are only door knocking, phone, banking.

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00:10:42.800 --> 00:10:54.970

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: mailing to a fundraising from the communities, the neighborhoods and the households that vote and donate the most you can safely skip households and in whole neighborhoods that are home to unregistered folks and low turnout folks

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00:10:54.970 --> 00:11:04.620

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and the democracy. All this program is meant to change those incentives. Now every household is worth contacting and walking. The block and meeting community members can yield as much campaign cash

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00:11:04.660 --> 00:11:11.220

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: as a cocktail reception of obvious. and the results from Seattle and Wayne can talk about this More are staggering.

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00:11:11.280 --> 00:11:23.920

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: The data shows that the problem is dramatically increased. The number of small donors is increase the diversity of donors Anecdotally, at least, it seems to open the door for more people from diverse backgrounds, Racially, economically, age wise to run for office.

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00:11:24.020 --> 00:11:35.690

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and and there's at least some evidence that that initially shows that it is increasing voter participation. So this is one data point. But Seattle's non voters who use a single democracy dollar voucher

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: are 11.7 times more likely to register, to vote and vote than a similarly situated person who does not use democracy on

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00:11:44.220 --> 00:11:50.130

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: the program is effectively pulling more people into the city's local democracy.

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: So that is the set of goals that we are trying to achieve in the city of Oakland. A like, I said at the outset. It may feel modest. It may feel like one new experimental program.

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00:12:02.620 --> 00:12:18.100

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: but I think what is at stake is a wholesale revitalization of one city's local democracy, and if we are successful in Oakland we can be a model for other cities around the State, and it potentially down the line for other States around the nation.

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00:12:18.100 --> 00:12:34.020

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: So it is a massive endeavor, and I am glad that we're joined by the Public Ethics Commission today, because now that measure W. Has passed, the work turns to them to implement a very significant new program in a very short amount of time.

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: But i'm proud to say that the legal one of voters in California common cause, and the entire coalition that fought for measured W. We'll walk side by side with public at these commissions. It does its work. We want this to be successful. We want the Commission to be successful, and we want Oakland to reap the benefits of this program in 2,024

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Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and beyond. Thanks.

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Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: thank you so much, Jonathan

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00:12:57.900 --> 00:13:14.030

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Ryan, you're up and and just reminding people that you are the current chair of the Public Ethics Commission, and have been handed a a huge present. If you choose to look at it that way by the people of Oakland. We look forward to your remarks.

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: Yeah, thank you so much for that. And thank you, Jonathan, for setting the table like that, and and we are really excited about this program. And it really was a a huge present, not

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00:13:28.420 --> 00:13:44.230

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: just us, but to the city of Oakland, and to to folks that are are interested in in increasing democracy and increasing engagement and participation. And I, I have to admit i'm a little bit sad today because it was

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00:13:44.230 --> 00:13:53.470

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: announced late last night that we are most likely losing our major League baseball team here in Oakland, and so that.

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00:13:53.750 --> 00:14:05.320

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: you know, is, is a tough thing to swallow. But at the same time, you know, getting to talk about this program and the promise that it has. And you know when you, when you feel hopeless.

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00:14:05.320 --> 00:14:21.860

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: when you feel like you are powerless against forces that are wealthy, and take things out of your control, Being able to talk about a program. It's something that we're doing that empowers people and makes Oakland part of a leading edge

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00:14:21.860 --> 00:14:47.920

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: of increasing democracy and being able to set a trend nationwide and doing and getting a chance to do something successfully. That's gonna help a lot of people, really, I think, should be a source of pride for Oakland, and can be a way that people can feel empowered in the face of of of feeling like they have no power. So we're excited to be a part of that, and we think this is

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: a tremendous opportunity. So

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: thank you for having us on this panel. Just briefly, i'm going to go through who we are as the P. E. I'm. Going to talk about the operational processes that we're putting in place in order to successfully implement this. I'm going to talk about her outreach

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and our timeline, and i'm gonna finish up talking about some of the challenges that we're facing as we move forward, and how folks here on this panel, and folks in attendance can help us overcome some of those challenges. So, just to briefly talk about the Public Ethics Commission and our history. We've been around since 1,996 with the mission to enhance city government integrity.

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: We're a city commission made up of 7 full time City employees and 7 volunteer Board members, and we're responsible for things like education and enforcement of government, ethics, laws, disclosure of political campaign fundraising and spending.

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00:15:42.570 --> 00:16:12.390

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and the city's public campaign finance system. And on that point the passage of measured W means we're headed into a major transition, as we have to ramp up and staff up in order to implement it and oversee the Democracy dollars program. So what are we doing to do that? Well, First of all, we've been working to ensure that we have the budget, the staff, the technology, and the systems in place to ensure successful roll out and administration of this program.

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: So in terms of budget, you know, we don't get a bump in funding for this until July first.

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: when the when the new fiscal year starts. So in the meantime we've been just, you know, looking at how we lay the groundwork, and we've submitted our budget proposal recently requesting sufficient funding to implement the program successfully and on time. And so the next step is we're awaiting the Mayor's budget proposal, which we're expecting very soon. And then that's going to head to the city council, and they're going to grapple with that in May.

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So we're keeping a close eye on that

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: in terms of staffing. We need a whole new team for this. So measure W. Includes minimum staffing of 4 full time positions to administer the program, and we requested in our budget proposal, democracy, knowledge program manager to

analysts, one to focus on compliance and training. One focus specifically on community engagement because we consider that to be a really key Part of this

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00:17:14.900 --> 00:17:29.600

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: we also requested an ethics investigator to handle the increased case. Load that we're expecting, as well as an administrative assistance. So we're hoping to get that full team in place. And then we also there's also a technology aspect to this

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and the systems aspect to this. We're working to develop Rfps for technology and administrative systems. We've been in touch with with with other city departments and the county registrar to research and develop the logistical elements of running the program, like, for example, just the as basic as the design and printing

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00:17:48.310 --> 00:17:50.840

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and the distribution of the vouchers themselves.

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00:17:52.120 --> 00:18:18.330

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: I wanted to touch on outreach, because, like I mentioned that something that we are really focusing on, we're really committed to raising awareness of the program and receiving input, through this whole process, and the goal really is to engage residents across Oakland, particularly residents from low income communities of color to increase civic participation and inclusion. Like we think this program really promises to do so. Among the elements that we're presently working on.

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: we're looking at. One is holding and attending community events. They could feature staff commissioners and allies. We also have developed a website that's now online. It's accessible through the Oakland Pec website where folks can go in. They can learn about the program. They can track our progress in terms of implementation, and they can sign up for updates to learn about events and other milestones in the program

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00:18:47.350 --> 00:18:59.990

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: that we've been reaching in ways that they can be a part of it. We also want to leverage our social media and the other tools that we have to really build awareness and build engagement. We want to get to the point in

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00:18:59.990 --> 00:19:11.120

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: communities where people are aware of this program. They're engaged with it. They're looking forward to it to it, being implemented next year. And so they know when they get those democracy dollars.

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00:19:11.380 --> 00:19:17.560

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: how they can use them. They're looking forward to receiving them. They're looking forward to using them and being engaged in the process.

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00:19:19.150 --> 00:19:36.810

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: I also wanted to touch on our timeline to give you full the sense of where we're at and what we're looking at. So when the measure passed, one of the first things that Suzanne and I did was we got together and said, let's, you know, put together a timeline of our activities and outcomes

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00:19:36.810 --> 00:20:06.800

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and our tasks, so that we can have an organized work plan to make sure we do the successfully, and to make sure we know that we're actually on schedule for getting this done. So so we put that together we drafted that so far we've been staying largely to that timeline with a couple of modifications that that i'll address in a moment. But our key upcoming milestones that we're looking at really start in July with the new start of the fiscal year. That's when we need to make sure that our program funds

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00:20:06.800 --> 00:20:24.660

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: budgeted and available. And you know that being really the most important thing that we're looking at right now, we want to get the tech vendor approved by July as well, and then following up in that by August, we want to get that those new positions filled that I just mentioned. We want to get that new team in place.

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: as well as a vendor approved for printing and mailing, and then the next major milestones that we're looking at, or towards the end of the year. By November, by December I get the voucher packet at mailing ready for distribution, get our technical system tested and ready to deploy and then, in that first quarter of 2024 moving into implementation, making sure that system can go live. Making sure that candidate application system begins to keep things on track. So so those are the major things that we're looking at

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00:20:54.040 --> 00:21:03.420

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: in terms of timeline moving forward. What are the challenges that we're looking at first and foremost the the budget, like I mentioned

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00:21:03.420 --> 00:21:32.590

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: the city of Oakland is looking at across the board, spending cuts. We submitted a proposal that did have significant savings, but still has the ability to implement the program successfully and on time. So we are hoping that that proposal gets accepted, and that we have that funding, moving forward. If there are additional cuts we're gonna have to look at what our options are in terms of contingency plans. We're gonna be looking toward our allies

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00:21:32.630 --> 00:21:52.610

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: on this panel and elsewhere, and and folks who support the program to talk about our options and and and talk about like how we can potentially fight for some funding. So you know, one thing we'd like to focus on on that if it comes to that is is really what the impact of these cuts is.

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00:21:52.640 --> 00:21:54.760

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and you know

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Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: how the city of Oakland will be negatively affected by cuts to this program. But you know, hope we're, we're hoping that it it doesn't it doesn't get to that point. Another challenge that we've had to deal with both on this on this panel, and then this.

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00:22:10.830 --> 00:22:36.960

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: in this in attendance here, might have read or heard about the ransomware attack that the city of Oakland was subjected to earlier this year that slowed us down for a period of time, but it really slowed down some of our partners within the city, particularly the it department. So some of the work that on those rps that I was talking about for the technical aspect of that have had to kind of get bumped down in the timeline a bit.

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00:22:36.960 --> 00:22:45.820

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: We don't at this point. See that as an essential threat to the on time roll out of the program. But it is something we're keeping an eye on.

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00:22:46.130 --> 00:23:01.940

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and then finally, just moving forward with implementation, wanted to mention one of our challenges, just setting expectations and measuring pre program performance going forward so that we have realistic goals, and we can set

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00:23:01.940 --> 00:23:16.730

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: expectations for what we hope to accomplish, and how long that's going to take us, and that's why we've been developing performance metrics and setting goals for what we're hoping to get out of this program in terms of inputs and outputs.

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00:23:16.930 --> 00:23:22.180

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: And the idea is not just to set external expectations. It's also so that we can look at

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00:23:22.180 --> 00:23:40.110

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: what we're doing. Are we meeting our goals? Are we meeting the thresholds that we're looking at so that we can see you know what's working, what is in in terms of what what we're doing and really focus on addressing that, and making sure that this is a successful rollout and a successful administration of the program.

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00:23:40.110 --> 00:23:45.740

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: So we're really excited to be implementing this. We think it has a ton of promise.

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00:23:45.740 --> 00:24:03.750

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and you know we know the stakes are high to get this right. So we really appreciate the work of everyone on this panel and in this room to for everything that you've done so far to get us to this point and everything you're continuing to do to collaborate on this effort and to help moving forward.

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00:24:03.760 --> 00:24:33.580

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: We couldn't be happier to to be a part of this, and to to get this opportunity. And you know we have a we have a new executive director coming in. I'm. Not sure if he's in attendance here today or not, but we're excited to bring him on board as well to to help with the rollout and and lead the roll out of this program. So, looking forward to Q. A. And looking forward to to hearing from other folks. But thank you very much for for having me and

110

00:24:33.720 --> 00:24:35.600

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: and having us on this panel.

111

00:24:36.850 --> 00:24:49.990

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Thank you, Ryan boy. That was just a wonderful tour of the You know the back backstage. What needs to go on to to get the show actually, and get the curtain lifted.

112

00:24:50.130 --> 00:25:07.000

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: So, Wayne, you're a pro at this, since you've been. You're the emeritus, I think, on this panel right years of work with Public Ethics Commission, and of course I don't know that we've mentioned yet that Seattle is the first and so far only city that has actually launched

113

00:25:07.000 --> 00:25:12.850

a democracy dollars program. So we're really looking forward to what you can share with us today.

114

00:25:13.020 --> 00:25:22.310

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Yes, I'm happy to. And I'm actually glad to welcome Oakland to the to the public financing world of democracy vouchers. That's what we call them to my currency vouchers that

115

00:25:23.590 --> 00:25:29.720

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: I was gonna say I was really struck listening to Jonathan earlier. His statement of the problem that you're trying to solve with this program.

116

00:25:29.770 --> 00:25:45.080

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: I really felt like it. Everything you said could have been set up here in Seattle like a decade ago we passed our program in 2,014, really to kind of get at the same problems Jonathan was talking about. We've got roughly one of satellites. We're contributing to local campaigns.

117

00:25:45.130 --> 00:25:47.230

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and our elections had really grown

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00:25:47.380 --> 00:25:53.480

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: frankly like the pilot bureau people incumbents, were re-elected, and the fact that we even had elections was kind of

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00:25:53.910 --> 00:26:01.030

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: It seems kind of beside the point. In 2,011 we have 5 council seats up, and every incumbent was re-elected.

120

00:26:01.190 --> 00:26:12.090

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: 2 challengers raised less than \$2,000. The other 3 contests, one out, raised. One was that raised 5 to one by the incumbent, 1 3 to one, and 1, 2 to one. So we really didn't have

121

00:26:12.170 --> 00:26:22.170

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: any competitive races. And then in 2,013, our city attorney actually ran unopposed. We have 4 council seats up, 2 challengers raised absolutely no money.

122

00:26:22.360 --> 00:26:34.850

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: 2 other seats were relatively closely matched in terms of fundraising. One incumbent lost our one incumbent, who lost in 2 election cycles. 3 races didn't even have a primary that year. So we really just we were looking at just

123

00:26:34.880 --> 00:26:49.180

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: kind of a dysfunctional election. We really didn't have a democracy in the true sense of the word. We had elections. But there was only one serious candidate on the election, on the ballot, and that person was the incumbent, and they were elected handily so.

124

00:26:49.270 --> 00:26:55.660

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: And that is the backdrop for our moved to democracy vouchers which our voters adopted in 2,014

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00:26:55.840 --> 00:27:02.990

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: by 66 to 6, 34 margins, so we almost hit 70, like Oakland, but

126

00:27:03.080 --> 00:27:14.250

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: a little short and the program, I have to say, has been pretty successful. We to distribute the same amount as you. We distribute \$100 to people in 4, \$25

127

00:27:14.320 --> 00:27:23.140

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: vouchers that they can return to us. It really has 2 main goals, one to increase the number of candidates who run.

128

00:27:23.280 --> 00:27:35.340

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and to increase number of people who can contribute. So it's really that it's the supply and demand side of the equations. Really try to increase number of people who can give and increase the number of people who can accept contributions.

129

00:27:35.460 --> 00:27:38.060

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and we've been successful on both of those counts.

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00:27:38.170 --> 00:27:42.400

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Contributors have gone from 1.5% of satellites

131

00:27:42.420 --> 00:27:46.000

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: to roughly almost 10% in those last election 2,021.

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00:27:46.120 --> 00:27:58.330

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: And I like to visualize that by thinking, When was the last time you're in a crowd of 100 people. and picture that in that crowd there may be one, possibly 2 people who've contributed to a city Council candidate

133

00:27:58.340 --> 00:28:00.220

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: so very, very light

134

00:28:00.720 --> 00:28:17.180

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: participation. But now, like every 10 people you meet, you guys figure like one of them is contributed to a city Council candidate. So

it's really gone from the exception to almost now a norm that people are. We're moving among people all the time who are participating in local elections. So I think that is very important.

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00:28:17.340 --> 00:28:19.840

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and our candidates have also risen.

136

00:28:21.870 --> 00:28:33.240

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: We've had 2 campaign reforms enacted. It's roughly the same time, though that's kind of a a little asterisk that will the devil's social scientists for a long time, but we also move to district elections in 2,015,

137

00:28:33.450 --> 00:28:46.030

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: which kind of unfortunately was very much in line with the adoption of democracy vouchers. So it's really difficult to say. Like we can't really say like this is the result of democracy vouchers. We also have this moves to districts

138

00:28:46.110 --> 00:29:00.660

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: prior to the 2,015 election cycle. All of our Council members were elected at large, and there are 9 of them. so every one of them was elected citywide. and in 2,015 we voted to move to

139

00:29:00.950 --> 00:29:09.440

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: a district. So now everyone represents, like a seventh of the city. We have 2 elected at large. so that has been a change at the roughly the same time.

140

00:29:09.670 --> 00:29:23.160

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: but in 2,019 we had roughly 50 candidates on the ballot. So we went from literally like that, most 4 in a race, and most of like several, not even on the primary ballot, because they're one more than

141

00:29:23.170 --> 00:29:29.730

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: 2 candidates to every kind of every race at multiple candidates, fine for elections, so that was great.

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00:29:31.480 --> 00:29:37.300

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: We have started here some complaints about the too many candidates on the ballot. Frankly, which is, I hope I hope

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00:29:37.370 --> 00:29:44.800

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Oakland, too, will be an enjoying that person a little while, like oh, there are too many people I can't choose. So that's a great problem to have

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00:29:45.060 --> 00:29:50.700

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: 2 trends actually happened since we've had it. Candidates are getting younger.

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00:29:50.940 --> 00:30:09.440

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: And we're also having more women running and elected running and winning. So that's that. Those are both good things. The average age of our council is now about a decade a lot younger than it was at the start of the program. So that's that's a really good news. We've gone from an older Council to a slightly younger council I think about is pretty good thing

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00:30:09.600 --> 00:30:13.030

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: in terms of challenges. I did want to just talk briefly.

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00:30:13.180 --> 00:30:21.760

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: We have had some issues with diversifying the contributor base. One of the things we we like, Ryan. We really tried to roll out of robust

148

00:30:21.810 --> 00:30:26.250

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: outreach with our program, and like hired people to do that.

149

00:30:26.390 --> 00:30:41.940

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: But at the end of the day we had some researchers, one from the University of Georgetown, Georgetown University, and one from Stony brook, and they looked at us. They said, hey, you have really done a good job of getting people involved in this program. You got many more contributors.

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00:30:42.300 --> 00:30:59.010

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: But the bad news is, they look a lot like the people who are contributing before. So then, so at that point we really started an Rfp. Process to bring in some community based organizations to help us do outreach. We realized we really couldn't do that as a government agency we couldn't really

151

00:30:59.200 --> 00:31:08.800

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: couldn't really reach deep into communities in and and engage people who were outside the process. So we really started

152

00:31:09.440 --> 00:31:20.570

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: using some of the groups already on the ground there to get our message out, and that's been very successful. Independent expenditures have also been a challenge. I don't know about Oakland, but

153

00:31:20.620 --> 00:31:32.730

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: one of the things we've had is an increase in the number of them in independent expenditures. Of course that kind of predated the dawn of the voucher program at frankly in 2,013. I did a I did a

154

00:31:33.440 --> 00:31:34.260

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Alright.

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00:31:34.320 --> 00:31:44.210

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: actually our election report. We had a little feature on how many independent expenditures there were in the Mayor's race that here, so they were starting to creep up. I think they doubled that year, and almost 600,000;

156

00:31:44.310 --> 00:31:53.810

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: but with the volunteers they continue to go up, and some people who are critics of the program want to blame the program for more independent money coming in.

157

00:31:54.230 --> 00:31:58.310

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Others. Haven't bought that line. So.

158

00:31:58.380 --> 00:32:03.380

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: But yeah, so I just wanted to. That's my spiel. But i'm happy to answer any questions.

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00:32:03.900 --> 00:32:05.120

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Thank you, Gail.

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00:32:05.550 --> 00:32:21.040

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Yes, absolutely. Thank you very much, Wayne. So I wanna first, and move to some of the questions in the Q. A. To acknowledge all of those of you who are out there and remind you that you can put your questions there

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00:32:21.040 --> 00:32:31.160

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and let's go to what you were just talking about. Wayne and i'm gonna address this one to Jonathan, do you want to talk about this a little bit, Jonathan? And the question specifically is

162

00:32:31.400 --> 00:32:36.650

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: that in Oakland the past mayoral elections showed huge independent expenditures.

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00:32:36.680 --> 00:32:40.250

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and the question is, what do you do to resolve the issue?

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00:32:40.870 --> 00:32:41.640

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: And

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00:32:41.770 --> 00:32:49.440

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: I know you. You talked a little bit about this, and Wayne is just touched on it. But I I think it. We can't kind of circle around the problem often enough.

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00:32:49.770 --> 00:33:00.160

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Yeah, we've spent Well, we in every other Democracy reform organization in America has been gosh the last

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00:33:00.310 --> 00:33:04.240

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: 10 plus years since it is united, trying to figure out If there's a way to

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00:33:04.640 --> 00:33:22.170

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: effectively address the flood of independent expenditures given the current Supreme Court Juris prudence. And the answer is that if there's a magic bullet out there, no one has found it, yet. We are effectively boxed in, or maybe it's boxed out by the by, the Supreme Court.

169

00:33:22.170 --> 00:33:32.220

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: And so we get this question a lot when we talk about what? What if anything, does it do about independent expenditures? And if the answer is nothing, then what's the point?

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00:33:32.560 --> 00:33:42.150

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: I mean? Unfortunately, I I or I guess. Fortunately the the those of us who are supportive of public financing systems, just kind of refuse to submit to cynicism. If, if it's the case that

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00:33:42.190 --> 00:33:44.600

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: independent expenditures exist, and as a result

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00:33:44.690 --> 00:34:04.350

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: we should throw up our hands to do nothing. We would sort of be giving into the idea that big money will rule our politics. And so we move forward with public financing systems, knowing that they don't solve every problem but that they make really positive steps towards solving some of the problems. And then that's the best we can do under the current Supreme Court.

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00:34:04.350 --> 00:34:06.550

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and that's good enough.

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00:34:06.690 --> 00:34:13.840

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: I think it's also worth noting that you know the whole idea behind democracy dollars is to

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00:34:14.380 --> 00:34:36.370

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: amplify people power to to give regular folks folks more voice, more access to their lawmakers, and more influence over who gets elected, and

the policy gets to get passed. So, while it is not a direct response to independent expenditures, it's not reduce the amount of independent expenditures. It indirectly tries to rebalance the system and respond to independent expenditures that way.

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00:34:36.370 --> 00:34:42.210

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: It's also the case for the record that the fair elections, Oakland, the Oakland Fair Elections Act did require.

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00:34:42.210 --> 00:35:03.380

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: did address independent expenditures in one small way. It will require going forward that independent expenditures in the city of Oakland disclose their top 3 funders on the advertisement themselves. On it's on the advertisement itself, so it's a it's an attempt towards transparency around infinity furniture which under the current Supreme Court, and its jurisprudence is the only

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00:35:03.380 --> 00:35:07.690

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: way, really, that we can attempt to do anything about independent expenditures.

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00:35:08.270 --> 00:35:25.640

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Okay, so that is a tool. And we all know Transparency is a is a potent tool, and it it's kind of on a circle back to what you said, Wayne. Where? Which is that although you also see the rise of independent expenditures in Seattle, it Hasn't stopped there being some.

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00:35:25.640 --> 00:35:38.230

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: let's say, change in terms of the the age of people who are drawn to public service, the the additional women who find themselves enabled to mount a campaign. So

181

00:35:38.260 --> 00:35:50.210

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: I think that in itself, since Seattle has been through what? See 3 election cycles with the vouchers says that it it can have an effect. Nonetheless, would you agree.

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00:35:50.370 --> 00:36:06.550

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: I would very much so. I think what Jonathan talked about earlier, like raising up the voices of some instead of trying to tamp down

the voices of the wealthy. I think we see that working, I mean, even with those independent expenditures here in Seattle we've had a complete overhaul in terms of our

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00:36:06.560 --> 00:36:13.040

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: elected body. I think there's one Council member remaining who was elected before about your program. So

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00:36:13.180 --> 00:36:22.820

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: we've had a total wholesale overhaul of our of our elected body. So that's that's a great thing, and I just want to say like, and if you give people enough money to get out their message.

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00:36:22.970 --> 00:36:25.370

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: you actually can kind of make

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00:36:25.550 --> 00:36:31.200

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: those into independent expenditures potentially less lethal, I mean when

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00:36:31.520 --> 00:36:37.000

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: the first big independent expenditure we had under the program was Amazon Company

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00:36:37.230 --> 00:36:38.280

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Corporation

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00:36:38.370 --> 00:36:47.790

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: poured like 1.5 million dollars into our city council races that first year. They just moved it onto the table like we are out to like show that

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00:36:48.260 --> 00:36:49.610

our elections are.

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00:36:50.110 --> 00:37:04.230

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: We're not. We're not giving up our like electoral advantage. But people began running like i'm not bought and paid for like they had that

on their signs like not paid for by anybody so, and that was successful, so that you know there is that message that has to get out.

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00:37:05.080 --> 00:37:16.880

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: I like it. The law requires that you say you get these contributions, but you can also advertise you. Haven't gotten them. That's fabulous. Okay, great. And

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00:37:17.090 --> 00:37:22.740

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: there is also a question that we have from our audience, which is.

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00:37:22.780 --> 00:37:33.340

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: addresses this idea that how can we in Oakland prioritize this? The given, the very significant challenges that we're facing.

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00:37:33.390 --> 00:37:52.840

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: And I think you know, this is something that causes a lot of people to stumble, and that we really want to lift up. Maybe if you all have something to say about the importance of actually showing up this the process by which we elect people to govern our city.

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00:37:52.840 --> 00:37:54.530

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Jonathan, do you want to kick that one off.

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00:37:56.620 --> 00:37:59.950

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Yeah, i'd be happy to. I mean, I I think

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00:38:00.550 --> 00:38:09.640

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: the city is facing a a really dire budget situation, and the fact of the matter is that everyone involved in the

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00:38:11.240 --> 00:38:22.700

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: measure. W. Coalition knows how important the city's programs and services are, and Don't feel like critical programs that matter in people's everyday life. Everyday lives need to be

200

00:38:22.850 --> 00:38:24.350

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: but

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00:38:24.420 --> 00:38:30.110

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: a deeply in order to fund the the full cost of the Democracy dollars program. We are supportive of

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00:38:30.110 --> 00:38:50.240

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: the public ethics commission's move to seek a partial budget allotment that would allow for a partial launch of the program in 2,024. I mean, I think it's important to note the democracy dollars program passes. 74% of the vote in the on the November about the city's voters really want this, and, moreover, it it is meant to help

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00:38:50.310 --> 00:39:09.970

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: community back candidates, one for office and help. All candidates rely more on the support of regular Oaklanders and less on wealthy donors and special interests. I think it is in some ways can be conceived of as an upstream solution to problems like underfunded programs and budget deficits. And so you know I I I was. I just think that it is

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00:39:10.120 --> 00:39:29.190

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: a it would be short-sighted to cut the program in the face of budget cuts, particularly when a partial launch is possible and would be effective. You know we can talk more about this at a later time, or all of us who are involved in implementation and talk more about this at a later time. But I do think there are avenues towards a partial launch of the program.

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00:39:29.620 --> 00:39:41.790

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: The P. E. To their credit, has gotten ahead of this issue, and is thinking those through. Already the public at the Sorry. The measure W. Coalition has been engaging with them and sharing our policy thinking. But the good news is that

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00:39:41.870 --> 00:40:00.300

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: there are ways to launch the program at a lower cost that still allows for high impact begins to shift Oaklanders perception that their democracy is not in their own hands. And then, when the budget situation for the city rebounds we can move to a full, long launch of the program. I think it's

207

00:40:00.300 --> 00:40:11.940

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: possible to be respectful of the city's budget realities, and the other pressing needs for public funding, while also moving forward with the to oxy dollars program in an effective way.

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00:40:13.280 --> 00:40:24.550

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Thanks, Jonathan Ryan. I have some targeted questions for you. I'm going to give you both at the same time. First of all is, when might people, if we know.

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00:40:24.560 --> 00:40:39.900

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: actually lay eyes and hands on democracy dollars under the program, and the second one questions whether some of the new hires that you were talking about to the Public Ethics Commission, which will be necessary to implement this program, whether they're civil service hires.

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00:40:39.900 --> 00:40:46.200

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and whether the length of time that it generally takes to hire people in Oakland will be any sort of impediment.

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00:40:48.000 --> 00:41:12.800

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: Yeah, thank you for that. And i'll also bring in our acting Executive director, Suzanne Doran, if she wants to chime in on any of this. But to to address the first question. So we have in our timeline democracy dollars being distributed to Oakland voters by April first of next year. So that's

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00:41:14.060 --> 00:41:42.560

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: you know, in advance of the elections next year that's taking into account the the legal process that candidates go through to qualify, and all the legal processes and logistical processes that we're going through to get these vouchers ready to go. So April First, 2,024 is our date for distribution of the vouchers, and then, in terms of getting the team in place, i'll ask Suzanne if she has any

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00:41:42.560 --> 00:41:45.180

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: sort of details to share about that.

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00:41:46.790 --> 00:42:07.130

Suzanne Doran / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: Hi, everyone. This is Suzanne, and I just want to apologize for being off camera. I'm having a technical problem, and Haven't had that in

in multiple years now of of public Public Ethics Commission meetings, but apologies and thank you for for hosting this event and bringing it all together.

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00:42:07.130 --> 00:42:15.410

Yeah, I think anybody familiar with public sector hiring knows that it can be challenging the the length of time that it takes.

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00:42:15.560 --> 00:42:35.390

Suzanne Doran / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: But we've already initiated that process. I started back in in January, so what we can do before the the positions are actually funded is that we are going through the process to what what we call like, develop a hiring list, so do the Civil Service testing and qualify people for those positions, so that

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00:42:35.390 --> 00:42:45.890

Suzanne Doran / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: once the funding is budgeted and available that we can quickly hire people. But i'll say that even even with us doing those steps

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00:42:45.890 --> 00:42:57.650

Suzanne Doran / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: that could still be a challenge to have people immediate. You know a team immediately in place in July. I don't know if that's a realistic expectation. But we're doing everything we can to make sure that that happens

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00:42:58.430 --> 00:43:00.870

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: great. Thank you so much.

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00:43:01.030 --> 00:43:28.740

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and related to what you told us, Ryan, about the April first date. I just want to remind everybody that would mean these would be vouchers used by by candidates in the November election since Oakland Doesn't use a primary election, since we have the rank choice voting instead, so that gives candidates a time to solicit support and and get resources to run a viable campaign in November.

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00:43:29.070 --> 00:43:37.080

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Our Our next question is that we all know, and I think, Wayne, you can a test for us that it takes time

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00:43:37.190 --> 00:43:49.430

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: for people to learn how to use their but their vouchers. Can you speak to how the utilization rate has changed from the first election cycle through the third.

223

00:43:49.500 --> 00:44:04.850

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and and tell us what the rate is roughly now. And the related question to that is that have you adjusted the cost of your program, or has it radically changed the cost of your program? When you have this higher utilization rate.

224

00:44:04.900 --> 00:44:07.210

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: i'm presuming it's a higher organization right?

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00:44:07.240 --> 00:44:27.940

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: I think the utilization rate went from one and a half one. It was roughly 2. The first year we had the program that you're only the at large city council candidates were permitted to use it and the city attorney. So there are only 3 races. Initially, so. We only had 2% was utilization right? We didn't have that many Canada South chasing vouchers

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00:44:27.940 --> 00:44:42.190

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: so that kind of depressed the number of people who could use them. Then it rose from to that, from from 2 to 4 in the next election cycle, and 4 to 8, 8, or 9 this time. So we've had that kind of massive growth in the number of in the uptake of these things.

227

00:44:42.220 --> 00:44:56.560

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: So, in in terms of the cost of the program, it has proven a little less costly than we thought it would. Frankly, I think we have to budget for 6 candidates in every position, every race on the ballot to run, using vouchers

228

00:44:56.560 --> 00:45:09.630

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and use all the vouchers available to them, and we have never had that level of participation, but had come close in a couple of races. But we've not seen that level of participation. So I think the cost is running a little less.

229

00:45:09.660 --> 00:45:20.830

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and we get 3. We collect 3 million dollars in property taxes every year to support the program. I think it runs out next year, though. So we're we're looking at kind of trying to renew the program.

230

00:45:21.000 --> 00:45:27.450

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: But yeah, we've not had that much of an increase in the cost, for, like I said, it's been a little less than budgeted so

231

00:45:28.280 --> 00:45:42.760

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: great. I'm gonna stick with you, Wayne, like, I said. There's you know there's downsides to being the been 3 times around the track. So but we'll all learn.

232

00:45:42.760 --> 00:45:53.510

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Do people tend to use their vouchers once they receive them kind of immediately afterwards? Or does it happen over the course of a space of several months closer to the election?

233

00:45:53.570 --> 00:46:08.290

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: And is it you, or is it the candidates who are mostly active in reminding people to use their vouchers as the election gets closer and related to that if some time goes by and somebody loses their voucher, how do you help them out?

234

00:46:08.600 --> 00:46:25.860

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Yeah, okay, wow, that's 3. So let me just try to remember your question, so I think the first one, like people use them initially when we send them out there's always a burst of activity, so people will get them, and we all know those people who will get something and act on it immediately. They will tend to return them quite quickly, and then

235

00:46:25.860 --> 00:46:36.820

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: but then we can enter a lull, and then, when the election kind of heats up, as we get closer to election time, August is our primary date, then we see more vouchers coming in. So that's that's kind of the

236

00:46:36.930 --> 00:46:37.690

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: the

237

00:46:37.710 --> 00:46:41.170

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: trajectory like a lot of them. Then tapers off, and then it

238

00:46:41.210 --> 00:46:55.210

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: spikes as we get closer to elections, and frankly, most people, most candidates, Max, out on them before election day. So we're always telling people do not hold on to them too long. Don't postpone it so long, because by the time you use them

239

00:46:55.210 --> 00:47:05.570

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: your candidate will have maxed out on the number of vouchers they can receive, so, and that I don't think we've ever had a candidate, or I guess we've had some. But most serious candidates are able to max out on their boundary usage

240

00:47:06.000 --> 00:47:24.750

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: in terms of like whether it's us or candidates. I think it's both. We we have a lot of social media out there telling people like, hey? You know your vouchers are in the mail, you know. Look for them. you know. Use your vouchers here. The candidates who can still take your vouchers. So. Yeah, I think if we do it, then we're expect Canada to do as well. I think that was one of the

241

00:47:24.830 --> 00:47:27.770

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: plans of the people who crafted. The program was like

242

00:47:27.890 --> 00:47:28.790

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: the best

243

00:47:29.110 --> 00:47:39.410

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: people for selling this program are the candidates. It's the people who have a vested interest in in people using their vouchers. So candidates are great, great advocates for the program.

244

00:47:40.220 --> 00:47:45.580

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: One more question I feel like so. Should I lose my voucher in Seattle.

245

00:47:45.920 --> 00:47:57.400

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Yes, if you lose your voucher one of the things when we first rolled out the program. We have a very cumbersome method for people to request replacement vouchers from us, and we would re-issue them.

246

00:47:57.460 --> 00:48:01.310

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: But we had a couple of candidates come to us that first year, and they were Just

247

00:48:01.920 --> 00:48:16.950

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: help me they're like I don't know what to do. I'm going to all these houses. I'm doing everything you told me to do, but nobody can find their vouchers, I mean, think about it. If you got a mail from the you know city, I think we had one candid who said she threw hers away. So it was. You know

248

00:48:17.220 --> 00:48:36.250

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: we had. People just thought it was junk mail, so we really we do try to make it, you know, obvious what was in there so, but it wasn't always successful. So we have people getting rid of them before somebody, you know, came looking for them. And so at that point we created a form for the candidate themselves to give to the person kind of thing like

249

00:48:36.510 --> 00:48:45.220

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: here, you know. You can use this, you know I, John Smith. do hereby assign these core vouchers to this person.

250

00:48:45.250 --> 00:48:50.940

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: So, and we still we we check all the signatures. We verify all those through the county.

251

00:48:52.500 --> 00:48:58.320

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: and that was very successful getting those used. So that's the best way to have them replaced.

252

00:48:58.660 --> 00:49:01.520

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Great. Thank you so much.

253

00:49:02.170 --> 00:49:20.630

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Yeah, that was probably 3 and a half questions too much. I want. I was trying to keep track you. Didn't you did marvelously, Jonathan. Here's one that's more Oakland specific questioner says we just finished with elections in 2 4 and 6,

254

00:49:20.720 --> 00:49:27.830

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and now we'll be coming up on elections in districts 1 3 5 7, and at large.

255

00:49:27.840 --> 00:49:39.320

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Will the voters in districts 2, 4, and 6 get vouchers which can be contributed as they wish, so they can, will wind up being able to contribute to candidates for whom they cannot vote.

256

00:49:39.840 --> 00:49:47.740

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Yes, so the that's the way things work. Now, of course, we have One of our problems is that

257

00:49:47.820 --> 00:50:03.120

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: candidates who are running to represent East Oakland and West Oakland, and other parts of the other parts of the Flatlands are doing their fundraising disproportionately in the hills. Now, that's not true of every candidate running to represent the flatlands, but it the the numbers show that

258

00:50:03.120 --> 00:50:22.880

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: among those who win a notes those who don't win disproportionately the fundraising is being done from folks who do not live in the Flatlands. And so that's basic standard campaign finance law across all jurisdictions. And everywhere in America you can donate to other council candidates running in this other parts of the city

259

00:50:22.880 --> 00:50:38.940

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: that would continue under Democracy dollars. However, in order to ensure that candidates do have a baseline level of support and credibility in their local community they are required to raise in in order to participate in the

260

00:50:38.940 --> 00:50:50.530

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Democracy dollars program. They have to raise a certain number of very small donations, \$10. That number is larger for May oral candidates, smaller for city council candidates.

261

00:50:50.540 --> 00:50:54.690

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: but a minimum number, a a

262

00:50:55.060 --> 00:51:10.730

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: a subsection of those qualifying contributions have to come from within the district you're seeking to represent. That is, say, you have to, before you can receive democracy, dollars and and use taxpayer dollars to fund your campaign. You have to show that you're serious

263

00:51:10.730 --> 00:51:24.340

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: by R. By showing a a, a modest number of small donations, and you have to show. Do you have credibility and appeal within the community you are seeking to represent, because a certain number of those qualifying contributions have to come from within the district you're running for

264

00:51:25.700 --> 00:51:26.560

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: great.

265

00:51:26.670 --> 00:51:44.810

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: And and while we're on these kind of details we have a question that asks about every registered voter getting a voucher mail to them, and the question is, first of all, will they, as a registered voter, get one mailed? But I think we should take the opportunity to also to clarify that you know

266

00:51:44.860 --> 00:51:53.390

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: mit Ctl. And all residents who are eligible to vote will be able to get vouchers. So if you could address that. Yeah, so it's. It's it's 150

267

00:51:53.520 --> 00:51:56.770

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: at the the population of people who were received

268

00:51:57.280 --> 00:52:13.500

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Democracy dollars in Oakland is as broad as possible under the terms of Federal law. So that is to say, you do not need to be a registered voter. You do not need to be a Us. Citizen. You do not need to be even an eligible voter. If you are a adult resident of Oakland.

269

00:52:13.500 --> 00:52:18.450

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: who, under Federal law, has the legal right to donate to candidates

270

00:52:18.580 --> 00:52:21.830

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: in the United States. you will receive

271

00:52:23.260 --> 00:52:28.430

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: for \$25 democracy dollar vouchers, and effectively what that means is

272

00:52:29.560 --> 00:52:35.360

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: all us citizens plus legal permanent residents will receive the Democracy dollars.

273

00:52:36.670 --> 00:52:48.170

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: and you can give them for the record to any municipal or school candidate. You cannot take an oakland to boxy Dollar and donate it to a candidate for governor or a candidate for President or anything of that kind.

274

00:52:48.560 --> 00:52:53.400

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Right? It's totally focused on the on the local elections

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00:52:53.700 --> 00:52:56.660

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: great. Thank you very much for that clarification.

276

00:52:58.130 --> 00:53:16.320

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Do do any of you want to have you thought about? You know the democracy dollars democracy vouchers is a form of small donor financing. Other cities have matching contributions. Do you want to speak to? You know the the merits that you see in the in the voucher program

277

00:53:17.580 --> 00:53:24.700

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: I could speak to that briefly. I think the best thing about vouchers is you don't have to have any money to be matched.

278

00:53:24.710 --> 00:53:37.160

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: so I I mean raising a family trying to like support yourself in this economy, most of us I the before I took this job, even after I took it. I didn't think I I never gave to a candidate.

279

00:53:37.170 --> 00:53:43.260

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: I never had like \$10 or \$20 that I would rather give to a candidate than like.

280

00:53:43.350 --> 00:53:55.770

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: Have my son playing an instrument, or playing baseball, or like any of those things. So so that's the beauty of vouchers. You're getting a \$100, which doesn't come out of your pocket or does through your taxes. But now

281

00:53:55.810 --> 00:53:57.620

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: not \$100.

282

00:53:57.910 --> 00:54:02.990

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: So that is why I do think that is the benefit of the program

283

00:54:03.190 --> 00:54:14.120

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: You don't have to have any money to give to him. Realistically, I think one and a half might be a good number. That was the number of people who actually gained from their pocket

284

00:54:14.280 --> 00:54:23.800

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: like 99. Point 5 of us don't have that kind of money to give to candidates. So that's that's to me the best argument for vouchers.

285

00:54:25.290 --> 00:54:33.180

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Jonathan, do you want to address that element as well?

286

00:54:33.230 --> 00:54:46.480

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Public findings systems in in a variety of forms. We think it's important that there's experimentation. People try different things to see what works best. Berkeley has a matching phone system. San Francisco and La have matching phone systems.

287

00:54:46.480 --> 00:55:04.120

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: The data seems to show that they do effectively increase the number of small donors in elections. They increase the percentage of campaign more chess that come in small to all amounts. We don't really have good data on race and gender diversity among donors, because but from New York there's

288

00:55:04.130 --> 00:55:18.000

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: robust data that shows that it a matching funds program increases the diversity of donors. Both the racial ethnic diversity and the geographic diversity of donors. But I I would Cosine Wayne's point that that

289

00:55:18.140 --> 00:55:28.030

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: democracy dollars enable people with 0 disposable income to donate to candidates for as a matching Punch program in order to have your \$50 donation match 6 to one.

290

00:55:28.050 --> 00:55:32.670

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: Well, that's fabulous, and the candidate is getting a hefty amount of money in their pocket.

291

00:55:32.890 --> 00:55:47.870

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: based on your \$50 donation. You still have that \$50 to donate to a city council candidate, which is not a common thing, as we know from the data and from life. And but also I think that one thing that's interesting about the Democracy dollars

292

00:55:49.290 --> 00:55:58.810

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: program is that you get to sort of pulled in your hand. This is my a fast track bill, but but imagine it's a democracy dollar voucher like you get to hold in your hands

293

00:55:58.840 --> 00:56:03.040

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: the the the sort of the effort the city is making to

294

00:56:03.110 --> 00:56:32.850

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: lift up your voice and empower you and and your your sort of views in the city's politics. It I think it has, it may be, more effective than matching funds as a civic engagement tool in a voter mobilization tool, because you can. People could hold their power in their hand, and you could hold town calls in which people all come with their democracy dollar vouchers. And you're You hear from a variety of candidates, and then you can go, and you can donate it. If somebody says something that moves you, I think it may have greater power.

295

00:56:32.940 --> 00:56:34.890

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: May it

296

00:56:35.010 --> 00:56:41.480

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: greater, persuasive, or philosophical power when trying to convince people to not be cynical about our democracy.

297

00:56:41.530 --> 00:56:51.900

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: But that's a little bit speculative, i'll admit. But there are Haven't been enough democracy dollars programs to to really know yet, and it's important that Oakland is helping us experiment and learn.

298

00:56:53.570 --> 00:57:09.730

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Okay, we just have a couple of minutes left. So this will just be a rapid response. Fire response from each of you. What comes to mind as your top metric for success for Oakland's implementation of the program. Ryan, I'll start with you.

299

00:57:10.160 --> 00:57:38.850

Ryan Micik / Oakland Public Ethics Commission: Well, i'll just start out with the, you know, very nuts and Bolts measure of how many of these things are getting used that we're sending out to, and how much it goes to each campaign, and each district in the city, and what gets used, what get, what doesn't? That's the first thing that we're going to be looking at, You know. Of course, we're looking at increased engagement increase, vote or turnout as well as sort of some bottom line measures. But that's those are the top line once the first ones that come to mind, and all that obvious time in

300

00:57:39.490 --> 00:57:42.780

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Great Wayne. You want to

301

00:57:42.990 --> 00:57:48.760

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: More more candidates and more contributors. Those are the 2 things which

302

00:57:48.780 --> 00:57:52.800

Wayne Barnett / Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission: you can measure easily. So I think they're They're good ones. Thanks.

303

00:57:52.940 --> 00:58:09.490

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: And, Jonathan.

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00:58:09.490 --> 00:58:17.590

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: we those that there we want to increase the numbers overall. What we also want to begin to address

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00:58:17.620 --> 00:58:23.020

Jonathan Mehta Stein / California Common Cause: California is really really deep disparities in political giving and political participation.

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00:58:24.170 --> 00:58:25.840

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Thank you so much.

307

00:58:27.660 --> 00:58:29.990

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: You make it to joy to be a moderator.

308

00:58:30.190 --> 00:58:40.410

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: and I think for all of us it's a joy to have years of work coming to fruition in Oakland and have the opportunity to

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00:58:40.460 --> 00:58:45.320

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: introduce this program to Oaklanders. And may we succeed?

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00:58:45.400 --> 00:58:48.000

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Jackson? I'm going to turn this back to you now.

311

00:58:49.760 --> 00:58:52.060

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): Thank you so much. Thank you

312

00:58:52.060 --> 00:59:21.220

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): to Wayne, Jonathan and Ryan for your participation Today I we really appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to be here today, and I would also like to thank Gail for her incredible moderating of this, for on I know I learned a whole bunch of dollars for everyone in the audience. Thank you so much for coming. A recording of this. Webinar will be on our website within the next couple of days, along with a copy of the Transcript and the chat. So if you have any questions at all, please feel fully

313

00:59:21.220 --> 00:59:29.920

Jackson Nutt-Beers / SPUR (They/Them): feel free to reach out to us the public programs@spread.org again. I hope to see you at another spur program. Zoom. So enjoy the rest of your day guys.

314

00:59:30.330 --> 00:59:31.640

Gail Wallace / League of Women Voters Oakland: Thank you all.