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Poll: Marylanders want public campaign financing, despite budget woes

A [Gonzales poll](#) released this morning by Progressive Maryland, a left-leaning advocacy group, shows that a majority of Marylanders want public campaign financing, something state lawmakers came close to passing last legislative session.

According to the survey of 833 registered voters, 77 percent believe that large political contributions have a corrupting influence on state lawmakers and worry that the money prevents them from tackling issues such as rising energy costs and protecting the Chesapeake Bay.

Seventy percent of respondents favor using a limited amount of public money to pay for political campaigns. What's more, 63 percent of the respondents say that they would like to see public campaign financing even in the face of a state budget deficit.

The poll "reaffirms this is still an important issue," said Ryan O'Donnell of Common Cause, which, like Progressive Maryland, has pushed for campaign reform for years.

With the [unexpected support last year of Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller](#), a Calvert County Democrat, a reform measure almost passed that chamber last year. (The House of Delegates has traditionally been more receptive to reform efforts.)

Miller signed on as a co-sponsor largely because the bill always provided for an increase in private contribution amounts. Sen. Paul G. Pinsky, a Prince George's County Democrat, said Wednesday that Miller has not committed to co-sponsoring legislation again next year.

O'Donnell said next year's proposal would likely be similar to the one that failed this year when a "poisoned" amendment was added by Sen. Bobby A. Zirkin, a Baltimore County Democrat.

The initiative would be paid for through voluntary \$5 income tax checkoff, rather than general tax dollars. Sean Dobson of Progressive Maryland said he envisions a "large pilot program" to begin in 2014 and provide about \$5 million to candidates who choose to participate.

http://weblogs.baltimoresun.com/news/local/politics/2009/10/poll_marylanders_want_public_c_1.html