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See Photos and Testimony & Report: The 2006 Election in Maryland, Maine and Arizona:

A comparison of campaign finance regimes

New Report Finds Record Amount of Money Pumped Into Maryland's 2006 Election

Money comes in big chunks from small number of individuals and corporate special interests – a contrast to Maine and Arizona, where public funding of elections worked well for fourth election cycle

Annapolis, Md.-- A report released today by Progressive Maryland shows that the 2006 election in Maryland shattered 2002's record for amount of money raised by candidates for state office and that the money comes mostly from business special-interest groups and from seemingly wealthy individuals in big and growing increments.

This dismal state of affairs in Maryland contrasts sharply with the 2006 election in Maine and Arizona, where for a fourth straight election cycle voluntary, publicly funded campaign finance systems continued to reduce the disproportionate role of wealthy contributors.

Specifically, the report finds:

- In Maryland's 2006 election, the total dollar amount of campaign contributions to candidates running for state office jumped to a shocking \$93,629,572 – a 69% increase over the 2002 election
- Only approximately 2.7% of Marylanders gave a contribution of any kind. The average amount donated by this small group was a hefty \$200 – a 21% increase compared to the average contribution in 2002.
- It seems very likely that this small group of people giving such big (and ever larger) contributions is disproportionately wealthy.
- Among organizational donors, for-profit entities (be they companies or business PACs or business trade associations) outspent non-profit entities (unions and nonprofit public-interest groups) by 22:1. And the money came in big chunks, with the average contribution at \$529 – a 38% increase over the 2002 average.

"In the Year of Abramoff, voters spoke loud and clear in the 2006 election against this tidal wave of special-interest money and the undue influence it purchases after the election," said Sean Dobson, Acting Director of Progressive Maryland. "Lawmakers can respond to the will of the voters by implementing Arizona-style public funding of campaigns – a proven and successful model that is very popular in Arizona with candidates and the public."

The report found that in the 2006 election in Maine and Arizona, more than half of all candidates opted into the voluntary, publicly funded system and about half of these candidates won. These winning, publicly funded candidates are now lawmakers who owe no favors to deep-pocket special interests.

Sen. Paul Pinsky and Del. Jon Cardin have submitted legislation in the current session of the Maryland General Assembly, SB 546/HB 731, to institute voluntary, public funding of General Assembly races. The Senate EHEA Committee heard testimony today in favor of the bill from Common Cause, Progressive Maryland, League of Women Voters, NAACP, Sierra Club, and other public-interest groups. Last year, this same legislation passed the entire House of Delegates and received a favorable report from the Senate EHEA committee. ###