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- Q. Why does Initiative 276 require reporting and recording of even very small campaign contributions? Is anyone really going to buy political influence with a \$10 contribution?
- A. Unfortunately, the exclusion of small contributions actually opens a very large loophole. Here is how it works. A contributor could make a secret contribution of, let's say, \$1,000. If contributions of \$10 or less were excluded from the law, it could be claimed that the \$1,000 contribution did not need to be disclosed because it was actually 100 contributions from different people of \$10 each, and there would be no way to disprove such a claim since there would be no requirement of record keeping of contributions of \$10 or less. This is not a hypothetical example but in fact what has happened under laws excluding small contributions. And, that is why Initiative 276 requires reporting of all contributions above \$5, and recording of all contributions so that such claims might be subject to verification.
- Q. Won't reporting of small contributions discourage contributions by the "little man" and the working man who might fear retribution from his employer or others?
- A. The most interesting thing about this contention is that we have never heard it made by the "little man" or the working man or by anyone with any credentials to speak on their behalf. It is no secret to employers that their employees are often of different political persuasion. Initiative 276 has broad support from labor and many other organizations representing just plain ordinary people. The cold fact is that political campaigns are not funded in any substantial way with contributions from "little people". Most unwealthy people who participate in political campaigns do so by contributing their time doorbelling or addressing envelopes and so forth. These part-time volunteer activities are not required to be reported. The whole purpose of Initiative 276 is to disclose the effect of money on the political process.
- Q. Initiative 276 is so long and complicated. Doesn't it impose an unreasonable paperwork burden on candidates?
- A. Candidates who have nothing to hide will find it very easy to comply with Initiative 276. Candidates are simply required to disclose campaign contributions and expenditures, which is information that they compile anyway for campaign bookkeeping purposes. Most of the language in Initiative 276 is necessarily directed to compelling disclosure by the candidate who is trying to hide or mask his sources of campaign funding.

- Q. Initiative 276 requires reporting of elected officials' financial affairs. Won't this discourage good people from running for office, particularly for some of the smaller, unpaid offices?
- A. Elected officials, even for smaller offices, often have the responsibility for spending large amounts of public funds for the purchase of real estate and goods and services and insurance and so forth. Potential conflict of interest between the elected official's public duty and his private gain is obvious and has been a recurring problem in the state of Washington. That is why Initiative 276 requires elected officials to disclose their real estate holdings and major business affiliations.

At any rate, it is the magnitude rather than the specific dollar amount of holdings which are reported under Initiative 276. The public needs to know if a holding is large enough to constitute a conflict of interest. Initiative 276 meets this need with specified category reporting of elected officials' financial holdings and interests.

- Q. Doesn't disclosure of campaign contributions violate the contributor's "right of privacy" and "freedom of association"?
- A. No. What is really at stake is every citizen's right to cast an informed vote. The right to cast a ballot for candidate A or candidate B is not worth very much if you don't know what candidates A and B stand for. Disclosure of sources of campaign financing tells the public more about what a candidate really stands for than tons of position papers and press releases and media advertising. Every citizen's right to cast an informed ballot ought not be sacrificed to "protect the privacy" of the secret campaign contributor whose expenditure effects the government of many people.
- Q. Initiative 276 imposes limitations on total campaign expenditures. Doesn't this favor the incumbent who has the name familiarity and the availability of his public office in his campaign?
- A. The fact is that usually the incumbent can and does attract more and larger campaign contributions because of the prestige and influence of his public office. Therefore, in many cases a ceiling on campaign spending will limit the incumbent rather than the challenger. In addition, Initiative 276 forbids the use of public office facilities in election campaigns so that incumbents will not have that unfair advantage.
- Q. Initiative 276 provides for public access to governmental records. Won't this invade the rights of privacy of individuals about whom information is contained in public records?
- A. No. Initiative 276 provides very strong protection of individual privacy. It exempts from public inspection and copying personal information in the files of students, patients, clients, welfare recipients, prisoners, probationers, parolees, employees, and individual taxpayers, as well as information in investigative files of law enforcement agencies and information revealing the identity of persons who file complaints with law enforcement agencies.

- Q. How much will it cost the taxpayer if Initiative 276 becomes law?
- A. Costs would be insignificant. Initiative 276 provides that it will be administered by an unpaid commission. The major governmental responsibility will be to serve as a depository for the various reports required to be filed. This means some additional office space and filing cabinets and some secretarial and clerical help — primarily at election time. And, if public disclosure of campaign financing and professional lobbyist activities results in even just one less tax concession or special privilege for some high-powered private interest group, Initiative 276 will more than pay for itself from the taxpayer's point of view. We think it will do even more than that.
- Q. The state legislature has placed on the ballot Referenda 24 and 25 dealing with disclosure of lobbyist activities and campaign funding. What happens if these referenda are adopted by the voters along with Initiative 276?
- A. Initiative 276 expressly repeals Referenda 24 and 25. In addition, Initiative 276 provides that in the event of conflict with other laws, the provisions of Initiative 276 will govern. Referenda 24 and 25 are more loophole than law. That is why the Coalition for Open Government sponsored Initiative 276 to give the voters a real choice in November. Initiative 276 requires all of the same kind of reporting called for in Referenda 24 and 25 plus closing all the loopholes in those referenda. Therefore, even if all three were to become law the result in most cases would be some duplicate and repetitive reporting.