

Election Reform Measures

Overview: The focus is on a) campaign finance reform; b) voting rights including opposition to gerrymandering and voter suppression; and c) ethics in government.

As you may know, I served as an Assistant Special Prosecutor on the Watergate Special Prosecution Force. I prosecuted cases dealing with the illegal use of money in political campaigns. With that background, I became interested and involved in campaign finance reform efforts. I am on the Boards of two “good government” non-profits: Democracy 21 and the Campaign Legal Center, both located in Washington, D.C.

Democracy 21 was founded and is run by Fred Wertheimer, who has been a reform advocate since the early 1970s. It is basically a “one-man show.” Its principal focus is on campaign finance reform. To this end, it publicizes the need for reform, works with Senators and House Members on drafting reform legislation, and participates in litigation relating to the enforcement and constitutionality of current campaign laws. Democracy 21 played an important role in the enactment of the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, which the Supreme Court upheld. Democracy 21 also focuses on ethics-in-government issues.

CLC, by contrast, has built a staff of 30 or so professionals. It also works on campaign finance reform issues alongside Democracy 21. But its remit extends to two other critical areas relating to voting rights. First, CLC has been an important opponent of political gerrymandering. To this end, it has participated in litigation at the federal and state levels and is working with states on reform initiatives, e.g., having voting districts determined by non-partisan commissions. Second, CLC focuses on voter suppression issues, i.e., laws that make it difficult for some, particularly minorities, to exercise their right to vote. Finally, CLC also works on ethics-in-government issues.

Both organizations depend on contributions from foundations and individuals. And both may offer opportunities for volunteer activities.

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