



Political Buzz

Talking WA politics.

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Pierce charter amendment supporters, opponents squabble over campaign cash

Post by [David Wickert](#) on Oct. 15, 2009 at 9:41 am with [22 Comments](#) »

Supporters and opponents of three proposed Pierce County charter amendments have been trading jabs recently.

Alex Hays, president of the Pierce County [Better Government League](#), which supports the three amendments, has accused opponents of accepting "secret campaign cash" from an out-of-state group.

State Public Disclosure Commission records show [Citizens Against Rigging the System](#), which opposes the charter amendments, has accepted \$22,000 from Fair Vote, a Maryland nonprofit. According to its web site, the group advocates for election law changes it believes will increase voter participation and give voters "more meaningful ballot choices."

Fair Vote has contributed more than 80 percent of the money raised by Citizens Against Rigging the System.

Hays says the contributions undermine the principal that "local issues should be decided by local people." He contends Fair Vote has not disclosed its contributors, so voters don't know who's ultimately behind the contributions. And he suggests the contributions are illegal because Fair Vote is a nonprofit and can't support a political campaign.

Poppycock, says **Kelly Haughton** of Citizens Against Rigging the System. Or words to that effect.

In a statement released following Hays' accusations, Haughton said IRS regulations allow nonprofits like Fair Vote to devote up to 20 percent of their income to advocacy for or against ballot measures and legislation.

Haughton noted the Fair Vote board is chaired by Washington resident **Krist Novoselic**, a former Tacoma resident. He said Fair Vote's financial backers include the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation.

Haughton contends Hays is trying to change the subject from unpopular charter amendments proposed by incumbent politicians to help themselves.

Near as I can tell, Haughton is right about IRS regulations. I found this in a “frequently asked questions” document on the IRS web site.

“ May a section 501(c)3 organization make a contribution to a ballot measure committee (committees supporting or opposing ballot initiatives or referenda)?

Yes, a section 501(c)3 organization may make a contribution to a ballot measure committee (committees supporting or opposing ballot initiatives or referenda), but it must include such contributions in its lobbying calculations for purposes of determining whether a substantial part of its activities consist of attempting to influence legislation.

For the record, here’s what the fighting is about:

- Proposition 1 would move the election of the county executive and council to odd-numbered years by 2015 and increase term limits for those offices from two consecutive four-year terms to three consecutive four-year terms.
- Proposition 2 would move the election of auditor, assessor-treasurer and sheriff to odd-numbered years by 2015.
- Proposition 3 would eliminate ranked choice voting and restore the primary and general election system for all county elected offices.

Here are the two sides’ dueling statements about the Fair Vote campaign contributions:

From Alex Hayes:

“ For Immediate Release 30 September 2009

Contact Alex Hays, PCBGL President: office 253.756.7836, cell 253.861.0103 or alexhays@pcbgl.org

Pierce County Better Government League to C.A.R.S.: “Return the funny money”

82% of “CARS” funding comes from the Maryland based 501 (c) (3) organization “Fair Vote” in an apparent violation of federal law and the principals of Washington State’s campaign finance disclosure requirements.

Tacoma, WA – “Local issues should be decided by local people” said League President Alex Hays, “this principal is under attack by the ironically named *Citizens Against Rigging the System*, who have taken over 80% of their funding from a single out of state special interest group”

PDC records show that Citizens Against Rigging the System (CARS) is funded entirely by two organizations: Fair Vote of Takoma, Maryland and a political action committee that shares CARS's P.O. Box. Of the total \$27,000 contributed to CARS, \$22,000 has been donated by Fair Vote and \$5,000 from the PAC that is itself heavily funded by Fair Vote.

It appears that Fair Vote's contribution is the largest to a Pierce County Charter Amendment campaign on record.

CARS opposes the three elections reform charter amendments that will appear on this November's ballot, which includes repealing the costly and unfair "Ranked Choice Voting" system which Pierce County experimented with in 2008.

Hays explained the unusual donation, "We know that Ranked Choice Voting rewards political extremism and distorts elections to give more power to the far left and the far right, Fair Vote represents the far left in the effort push Ranked Choice Voting on the people of America."

Other serious issues make the Fair Vote contribution troubling. Fair Vote is listed as a 501 (c) (3) organization and it appears cannot lawfully donate to CARS. Fair Vote's donors are not disclosed, effectively allowing the extremist organization to inject secret campaign cash into CARS or even money that would otherwise be revealed to be an illegal contribution to CARS.

"To illustrate the danger Fair Vote represents through an admittedly extreme example," said Hays, "this money could be coming from George Soros, the Ku Klux Klan or the Communist Party."

"Secret money is funny money and poses a real danger to democracy. This money must be returned. Fair Vote must fully disclose its current donors," said Hays.

Pierce County Charter Amendments 1, 2 and 3 will appear on the general election ballot. These measures will together shift county elections to odd numbered years, set a limit of three terms of service for County Executive and County Council and repeal the Ranked Choice Voting system the county experimented with in 2008. The PCBGL, through its allied political action committee the PCBGL Voter Education Fund, will support all three charter amendments as part of the League's commitment to good government reforms.

Neither the PCBGL nor the PCBGL Voter Education Fund will solicit or accept contributions from donors outside Washington State. All league activity through the time period of the election is funded through the VEF, which further guarantees compliance with disclosure requirements. "The effort to approve 1, 2 and 3 will be locally funded," concluded Hays.

Learn more at www.pcbgl.org

END

From Kelly Haughton:

“ Pro-Rigging Group Tries to Change the Subject

With Losing Issues, PCBGL Tries to Attack Messenger

Last week, Alex Hayes and the so-called Pierce County Better Government League (PCBGL) issued a news release attacking Citizens Against Rigging the System and some of its sources of funding.

Kelly Haughton of Citizens Against Rigging the System dismissed the attacks. “This is a case of a political operative trying the usual tricks of attack politics. When you don’t have majority support for your candidate or your issue, you resort to attacks on your opponent. But it’s not going to work because we have the strength of argument — and electoral majority — on our side.”

Citizens Against Rigging the System was formed this year to oppose charter amendments one, two and three — a set of measures designed to personally benefit board members of PCBGL as well as other members of the County Council. The amendments would make it possible for incumbents to stay in office for over a decade by extending their own terms, double how much they can raise from their largest contributors, reduce political competition and move selected offices to lower turnout odd-year elections. Headed by county incumbent politicians, the PCBGL was formed to promote their own careers by rigging the system in their favor.

In the specific case of ranked choice voting, the county council is trying to undo a charter amendment proposed through the traditional charter revision process in 2006 and passed by the voters that year and upheld by a landslide margin in 2007 when first attacked by the county council. In the first ranked choice voting elections in 2008, the number of competitive elections and candidates jumped significantly from the previous system. The system has the strong support of many county civic leaders, including the League of Women Voters of Pierce County. PCBGL wants to restrict the number of candidates running for county level positions. The measures they are advocating are designed to give us a repeat of 2006 when the five incumbents ran for re-election — four of them unopposed — the other with only token opposition.

“Rather than try to defend the county council’s latest attack on our charter,” said Haughton, “incumbent-laden PCBGL makes bizarre accusations against those defending the charter and county voters.”

The largest contributor to Citizens Against Rigging the System is FairVote – The Center for Voting and Democracy. FairVote is a highly respected national organization that is widely recognized as the leading backer of ranked choice voting. Its board chair is musician Krist Novoselic, a Washington resident who used to live in Tacoma. Other board members include New Yorker magazine essayist Hendrik Hertzberg, the Advancement Project’s Eddie Hailes and former Republican Congressman and presidential candidate John Anderson. Foundation funders for its projects include the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation. For many years, it has been designed as an organization that can receive gifts from the Combined Federal Campaign.

More specifically, PCBGL alleges that FairVote as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization cannot make a donation to a committee organized to take positions on ballot measures. This is false, as they should know from reviewing the IRS code and the Public Disclosure Commission's website. Organizations like FairVote can devote up to 20% of their income to advocacy for and against ballot measures and legislation. It is following standard practice. A quick perusal of the PDC website shows several ballot committees in Washington receiving contributions from national organizations.

FairVote's board chair Krist Novoselic commented, "We are proud to support all the grassroots activists and groups like the League of Women Voters working hard for a better democracy in Pierce County. I attended Pierce County Charter Review Commission meetings in 2006 in support of the many people testifying on behalf of IRV and improved voter choice. We supported the charter commission's recommendations for ranked choice voting in 2006 and are pleased to be able to support those defending that victory in 2009. Not all incumbent politicians like ranked choice voting, but voters like having better choices and more competition."

Citizens Against Rigging the System encourages Pierce County voters to reject all three self-serving charter amendments.

Rejectall3.com

CATEGORIES: [Campaign News](#), [Pierce County](#)

TAGS: [Charter amendments](#)



<http://blog.thenewstribune.com/politics/2009/10/15/pierce-charter-amendemnt-supporters-opponents-squabble-over-campaign-cash/>



IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEDGES, ORDERS, DEBTS, OBLIGATIONS

SCHEDULE
TO C4

B

(11/93)

3

Candidate or Committee Name (Do not abbreviate. Use full name.)

Report Date
10/27/09 11/30/09

1. IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED (goods, services, discounts, etc.)

Date Received	Contributor's Name and Address	Description of Contribution	Fair Market Value	Aggregate Total	P R I	G E N	If total over \$100, Employer Name, City, State & Occup
10/27/09	FAIRVOTE 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite Takoma, MD 20912	Campaign Manager salary	2,500.00	12,200.00		<input type="checkbox"/>	
11/10/09	FAIRVOTE 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite Takoma, MD 20912	Campaign Manager Salary	525.00	12,200.00		<input type="checkbox"/>	
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		TOTAL THIS PAGE	3,025.00				

**CASH RECEIPTS
 MONETARY
 CONTRIBUTIONS**

C3
 (1/02)

100330745

10-25-2009

Candidate or Committee Name (Do not abbreviate. Use full name.)
 Citizens Against Rigging the System

Mailing Address
 P.O. Box 1743

City Tacoma, WA Zip + 4 98401-1743 Office Sought (candidates) Election Date 2009

1. MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS DEPOSITED IN ACCOUNT

Date Received	Amount	Total
a. Anonymous		
b. Candidate's personal funds deposited in the bank (include candidate loans in 1c).....		
c. Loans, notes, security agreements. Attach Schedule L.....		
d. Miscellaneous receipts (interest, refunds, auctions, other). Attach explanation		
e. Small contributions \$25.00 or less not itemized and number of persons giving _____ (persons)		

2. CONTRIBUTIONS OVER \$25.00

Date Received	Contributor's Name, Address, City, State, Zip	Contributions of more than \$100: Employer's Name, City and State	P R I	G R E N	Amount	Aggregate* Total
10/23/09	FAIRVOTE 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 610 Takoma, MD 20912-4498				1,000.00	23,000.00
		Occupation				
		Occupation				
		Occupation				
		Occupation				
		Occupation				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Check here if additional pages are attached	Sub-total Amount from attached pages			1,000.00 0.00	

***See reverse
 for details.**

3. TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED AND DEPOSITED OR CREDITED TO ACCOUNT
 Sum of parts 1 and 2 above. Enter this amount in line 1, Schedule A to C4.

1,000.00

4. Date of Deposit 10/23/09

Treasurer's Signature Douglas E Sharp

Treasurer's Business Telephone No. (253) 278-1101

I certify that this report is true and complete to the best of my knowledge

Date 10-25-2009