

Public Policy Roundtable
“Reforming the Campaign Money System, California Style”
Ms. Susan Lerner, Executive Director, California Clean Money Campaign
September 22, 2006

With the November election just weeks away, Ms. Susan Lerner addressed the timely topic of campaign finance reform through a closer look at Proposition 89, the Clean Money and Fair Elections Act. As the Executive Director of the California Clean Money Campaign, Ms. Lerner provided a detailed summary of the proposition which tackles campaign finance reform from several angles. Ms. Lerner enumerated the ways in which the current campaign financing system favors the demands of special interest lobbyists, at the expense of the general public, through campaign donations. This “pay-to-play” campaign financing system, Ms. Lerner described, has severely damaged the public trust, negatively affecting voter turnout. Moreover, Ms. Lerner said that based on her experience, the majority of elected officials would prefer to spend less time fundraising and more time on legislation. Proposition 89, modeled after states with similar policies in place, would address these problems by providing full public funding of elections in California. In her white paper titled, “Reforming the Campaign Money System, California Style” Ms. Lerner reviews the benefits of publicly funded elections—for both voters and candidates alike—already experienced in Arizona and Maine as incentives for Californians to vote yes on Proposition 89.