

HOUSE No. 811

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Mike Connolly

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act authorizing cities and towns to provide for citizen-funded election campaigns.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/15/2025</i>

HOUSE No. 811

By Representative Connolly of Cambridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 811) of Mike Connolly for legislation to authorize cities and towns to provide for citizen-funded election campaigns for municipal offices. Election Laws.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act authorizing cities and towns to provide for citizen-funded election campaigns.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 55C the following
2 chapter:-

3 CHAPTER 55D. LOCAL-OPTION CITIZEN-FUNDED ELECTION CAMPAIGNS.

4 Section 1. The general court finds that a vibrant democracy requires that candidates for
5 municipal office raise funds to run effective campaigns, including to hire staff, distribute
6 campaign materials, and set up websites. In cities and towns that so decide according to this
7 chapter, citizen-funded election campaigns encourage residents who are not able to raise
8 significant funds from friends, relatives, and other connections to run for municipal office and
9 increase the impact of small-dollar donations.

10 Section 2. A city or town may, by adopting or revising its charter or by adopting an
11 ordinance or by-law under this chapter, provide for citizen-funded election campaigns for
12 municipal offices. An ordinance or by-law shall be adopted following procedures in the

13 municipal charter including the municipal initiative and referendum. Every charter provision,
14 ordinance, or by-law under this chapter shall make the following specifications and shall provide
15 that:

16 (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be set up on the
17 books of the city or town a separate trust fund to promote citizen-funded municipal election
18 campaigns, to be known as the Democracy Trust Fund, in this section called the Fund. The city
19 or town clerk, in this section called the clerk, shall administer the Fund and shall be its trustee.
20 An election commission, where one exists, shall instead perform the clerk's duties under this
21 section .

22 (b) At the clerk's written request, at the beginning of each campaign cycle, the city or
23 town treasurer shall transfer to the Fund, without appropriation, an amount specified in the
24 charter provision, ordinance, or by-law.

25 (c) In order to qualify for matching funds from the Fund, candidates for specified
26 municipal offices must receive a specified number of contributions of \$10 or more from separate
27 individuals who are registered voters of the city or town. Contribution amounts of not more than
28 \$50 shall be matched by double those amounts from the Fund.

29 (d) A candidate shall not receive more than a specified amount of matching funds from
30 the Fund. In order to be eligible for matching funds, candidates and their political committee
31 must agree to limit their spending per campaign cycle to a specified amount. The clerk shall
32 adopt a regulation adjusting the specified amounts for increases in the cost of living.

33 (e) The clerk shall administer the charter provision, ordinance, or by-law and shall adopt
34 regulations to implement it. Such regulations may include, but are not limited to, the process for

35 applying for matching funds. The office of campaign and political finance shall cooperate with
36 and assist the clerk at the clerk's request.

37 (f) The charter provision, ordinance, or by-law shall apply beginning not less than one
38 year before the first specified election.

39 Section 3. Chapter 55 and other general and special laws shall apply to the extent
40 consistent with this chapter.