**Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections**

**Position Statement on H. F. 691**

 H. F. 691 DE contains the abolishment of the state elections campaign account, more commonly referred to as the public subsidy for candidates for statewide elective office in Minnesota. This program has been in existence for 25 years and has been very successful. In 2016, 339 candidates representing 89.7 % of the candidates running for office participated. Republican and DFL candidates participated and agreed to spending limits for their campaigns.

 Is this a wise use of public money? Only if you believe in representative democracy. The public subsidy minimizes the impact of special interest contributions and large contributors. It encourages legislators to look to their full constituency rather than a small number of contributors. It promotes the will of the people rather than the power of money.

 This program has become even more significant with the advent of Super Pacs and other independent expenditure committees that can send unlimited funds to state campaigns. This became more common in 2016 as Super Pacs outside Minnesota realized that their money went a long way in state campaigns and could determine the outcome of elections. An unknown amount of these contributions were secret so that voters had no idea who was supporting the candidates they were voting for or against.

 What will happen if this program is eliminated? Minnesota will join those states in which “pay to play” is sanctioned as legitimate funding of political campaigns. Democracy will suffer in Minnesota and voter cynicism, already a problem, will increase. What is the point of participating when money decides he outcome?

 We strongly urge you to delete the public subsidy repeal from H. F. 691 and continue to support fair elections as Minnesota has for 25 years.

George Beck - Chair