

## LWVGT GENERAL MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

**Topic: Money-Politics- Speech: Whose Speech Is Being Heard ?**

**DATE: February 21, 2015**

**TIME:10AM to 1135 AM**

**PLACE: Joel Valdez Public Library/Tucson AZ**

**SPEAKER: Thomas Collins, / AZ Citizens Clean Election Commission**

**Attendance: 38 ( including speaker)**

Thomas Collins, Executive Director of the Arizona Citizens Clean Elections Commission provided a very informative presentation on the current state of the influence of dark money on Arizona elections. Overall feedback for this program was positive. Audience members were attentive and engaged. The seven handouts provided were thought to be helpful reference material to learn more about the history of campaign finance reform ( CFR), especially relative to the LWV reform efforts. The 30 minute Q&A session generated well informed questions for our speaker to address. Fifteen questions were submitted ; 10 were asked in the time allotted; 5 were duplicate questions.

### **IMPORTANT POINTS:**

1. Voters made a commitment for clean elections and passed an independently funded agency in 1998.
2. Clean elections was explained as more of a system with public financing a component of that system.
3. The 2014 Arizona elections were the most expensive but least transparent in Arizona history.
4. Elections today are more about the voters than candidates and their positions on challenges facing voters.
5. About 47% of donor groups in the 2014 Arizona elections were undisclosed.
6. In the Arizona State Constitution , it is written that corporations cannot directly contribute to campaigns. However , in 2010 The US Supreme Court ruled that corporations and unions have the same political speech rights as individuals under the First Amendment. It found no compelling government interest for prohibiting corporations and unions from using their general treasury funds to make election related independent expenditures. The disclosure and disclaimer requirements associated with election communications are constitutional.

- Citizens United struck down McCain-Feingold ( 2002)campaign finance reform.
7. Sleeper issue: a federal judge has stated that Arizona's definition of political committee is vague. Under Title 16 ( HB 2647) , new language is being considered: not a political committee UNLESS the primary purpose is to effect an election. If this language passes, it will close the door on fixing dark money.
  8. The AZ Senate Judiciary Committee voted 4-3 February 19,2015 along party lines to give voters a chance to reconsider whether they want to keep the optional public financing system for candidates. Funding for the Commission is largely from a surcharge on civil, criminal and traffic fines which last year collected \$ 8.4 million dollars. SCR 1001 would put the measure on the 2016 ballot asking voters to instead give that money to education. The measure is supported by the Free Enterprise Club which spent more than \$1.6 million dollars in the last election on behalf of some Republican candidates. Mr. Collins called the measure misleading as "it is one thing to ask voters to abolish the cleans elections system but something else to ask voters to choose between campaign funding and education."
  9. Clean elections is a complicated process filled with nuances and certainly not the simple system to encourage more qualified and diverse candidates to run for office and get money out of politics.
  10. Ideas on how to deal with the challenges of dark money in politics have yet to be firmly realized. There is a designated staff person in the Clean Elections Commission( Gina Roberts) developing a Voter Education Action Plan.

If interested in more information about the Arizona Clean Elections Commission, contact their office at 1-602-364-3477 or 1-877-631-8891. Email [ccec@azcleaselections.gov](mailto:ccec@azcleaselections.gov). You can also type in your browser: [arizonacitizens clean elections commission](http://arizonacitizenscleanelectionscommission.com) and browse their web pages.

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