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Oakland Reinstates Public Financing for 2024 Council District Elections

The City of Oakland reinstated its Limited Public Financing Program (LPF) for the 2024 election cycle to fill a gap in the availability of candidate public financing until the City's pioneering Democracy Dollars Program takes effect in 2026.

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November 8, 2023 — Last night the City Council voted unanimously to reinstate Oakland's Limited Public Financing (LPF) Program for 2024 City Council District elections. The ordinance, which was proposed by Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas, Councilmember Carroll Fife, and the Oakland Public Ethics Commission, ensured that 2024 would not be the first election in over two decades without public financing to support qualifying candidates running for City Council office.

"Public financing is an important tool to ensure that candidates who have broad community support, but that are not connected to networks of wealth, can run for office," **said Public Ethics Commission Chair Ryan Micik**. "Oaklanders recently voted overwhelmingly to strengthen public financing in City elections. While the Public Ethics Commission works to roll out that stronger Program in 2026, it was important that we maintain our existing program in 2024."

Oakland has provided public funds to support qualifying candidates running for City Council District Office for over two decades. However, the LPF Program was repealed in 2022 when Oakland voters passed Measure W to establish a more robust public financing program called the Democracy Dollars Program. While the Democracy Dollars Program was set to take effect in 2024 elections, the Program was postponed to 2026 due to budgetary reasons, leaving Oakland with a gap in public financing for the upcoming 2024 election cycle. As a result, the Ethics Commission voted in August to recommend that the Council reinstate the LPF for 2024.

"In a difficult budget environment, we were able to preserve an important program that helps candidates, regardless of personal wealth, to run for local office," **said Council President Bas**. "I am proud to have sponsored this critically important stopgap legislation to uphold our local democracy while the City builds up its transformative Democracy Dollars Program for 2026."

The Democracy Dollars Program was established by Oakland voters with the passage Measure W, with 74% of the vote, in November of 2022. Under the Program, which is set to begin with the 2026 election cycle, the City will send four \$25 Democracy Dollar vouchers to eligible Oakland residents who can then assign the Dollars to the candidate of their choice. The Program is modelled after Seattle's pioneering Democracy Vouchers public financing system and is designed to address recommendations in the Ethics Commission's 2020 [Race for Power report](#) to build a more inclusive local democracy.

"We are grateful that the City Council passed this important legislation recommended by the Ethics Commission," **said Public Ethics Commission Executive Director Nicolas Heidorn**. "Public financing helps to ensure that candidates, once elected to office, work in the interests of the public, not special interest campaign donors. The message today from the City is 'Oaklanders, we heard you in 2022, and we are committed to investing in and building a more accountable and inclusive local democracy.'"

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About the Public Ethics Commission

The Public Ethics Commission ensures compliance with the City of Oakland's government ethics, campaign finance, transparency, and lobbyist registration laws that aim to promote fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in city government. The Commission also administers the City's candidate public financing programs.

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