



1 comments

Print | Order Reprints | 4

Report lauds high court financing

Recommend 19 people recommend this. Sign Up to see what your friends recommend.

By Jim Morrill
jmorrill@charlotteobserver.com

Posted: Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014

Months after North Carolina lawmakers ended public financing for judicial campaigns, a new report says the system had a "powerful impact" on campaigns for the state's highest court.

The nonpartisan National Institute on Money in State Politics found that private contributions to Supreme Court races fell by almost half between 2004 and 2012.

It also found that, financially at least, statewide races became more competitive with public financing.

The report comes as candidates are filing for new elections to the Supreme Court and state Court of Appeals.

The Institute, which just studied Supreme Court races, is the latest group to praise North Carolina's public financing system.

The program offered candidates for the Supreme and appellate courts, as well as some Council of State offices, public money for their campaigns. Supporters said it helped immunize judges from the influence of well-financed special interests.

In 2012, all eight statewide judicial candidates took the money, which comes from voluntary tax check-offs and annual fees on attorneys.

"It looks like ... Supreme Court candidates will now need to go back and rely on contributions from private donors and political parties to fund their campaigns," said Denise Roth Barber, managing director of the Montana-based Institute.

Lawmakers find fault

Last summer lawmakers ended public financing of judicial elections as part of a comprehensive voter bill, that also mandated voter IDs starting in 2016. Critics said public financing uses taxpayers' money to help elect candidates those taxpayers might oppose.

"We just felt that taxpayers were being told that their money was going to be used for candidates who might not have been their choice," Sen. Bob Rucho, a Matthews Republican, said Thursday.

Rucho said Republican lawmakers also took issue to the system's "rescue funds" provision. That allowed public financed candidates to tap an additional pot of money if they faced an opponent who was soundly outspending them. A federal court struck down the provision in 2012.

Gov. Pat McCrory said last year that he doesn't believe public financing has been effective in North Carolina or nationally. "Like running for City Council," he said at the time, "you ought to be able to raise your own money."

FILE FREE ONLINE
Taxes made easy. Refunds made fast.



H&R BLOCK File Free Today

FILE FREE ONLINE
Taxes made easy. Refunds made fast.



H&R BLOCK File Free Today

Get the Deal!

Up to 56% Off Custom Rug Cleaning



\$75.00

Buy Now!

Value: **\$162**
Discount: **53%**
You Save: **\$87**

dealsaver.com

Sign up for the daily deal email

Enter Email

Get Deals!

careerbuilder.com

QUICK JOB SEARCH

Enter Keyword(s):

Enter a City:

Select a State:

All United State

Select a Category:

All Job Categor

Advanced Job Search | Search by Category **SEARCH**

Other critics said court rulings that opened up new channels of funding campaigns had muted the impact of public financing.

In 2012, for example, two state Supreme Court candidates each got about \$240,000 in public money. But outside groups spent \$2.6 million on the race, \$2.3 million of it backing incumbent Paul Newby. That year, only the governor's race drew more outside money.

Public financing popular

The institute report found that while private donations comprised 77 percent of contributions in 2000 and 2002, before the Public Campaign Fund was in effect, it dropped to 40 percent between 2004 and 2012 when it was.

During that time, it found Supreme Court candidates got 56 percent of their money from public financing.

The 2002 law that created public financing required candidates to raise a certain amount of private money to qualify for public funds. It limited donations to judicial candidates to \$1,000. Last year the General Assembly raised that to \$5,000.

Among those lobbying to keep public financing were three former governors, Republicans Jim Holshouser and Jim Martin and Democrat Jim Hunt.

"There had been the concern that it doesn't look right to have judges raising money from the attorneys and others who come in their courtroom," said Bob Hall, director of Democracy North Carolina, a group that advocated for public financing.

Now, he added, "Basically people have the choice of being wealthy and well-connected or raising money from others who are wealthy."

Morrill: 704-358-5059

[Subscribe to The Charlotte Observer.](#)

HIDE COMMENTS

The Charlotte Observer welcomes your comments on news of the day. The more voices engaged in conversation, the better for us all, but do keep it civil. Please refrain from profanity, obscenity, spam, name-calling or attacking others for their views.

Have a news tip? You can send it to a local news editor; email local@charlotteobserver.com to send us your tip - or - consider joining the [Public Insight Network](#) and become a source for The Charlotte Observer.

[Read more](#)

View 1 comment

Add a comment...

William Hollar · Top Commenter · UNC Chapel Hill
GOP sez, "It was broken". It's getting better all the time. Judge, \$2.3 million....Justice, priceless.
Reply · 2 · Like · February 13 at 5:04pm

Facebook social plugin

Recommend 19 people recommend this. Sign Up to see what your friends recommend.

From around the Web

ADVERTISEMENT



Here are 25 of the most gorgeous cheerleaders on NFL sidelines.



FEMA is scared that people will hoard the #1 MOST critical item in a crisis. [VIDEO]



Texas Will this stock explode? Can you turn \$1,000 into \$100,000?



Discover Your Risk of a Heart Attack in Just Minutes. Take Dr. Crandall's Free Online Heart Test!

SALARY DATABASES

City of Charlotte | Mecklenburg County
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

[CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FEATURED JOBS »](#)

- Maintenance Technician
Palms Associates
US-NC-Mooresville
 - Electro Mechanical Technician
US-NC-Gastonia
 - Carpenters
Millennium Construction
US-NC-Charlotte
 - Belt Mechanic
US-NC-Charlotte
 - Sectic Truck Operator
- [» SEE MORE FEATURED JOBS](#)

RECENT BLOGS

- WEATHER GUY [12](#)
[More winter weather ahead for Carolinas](#)
- YOUR SCHOOLS [12](#)
[Can governor save the \(makeup\) day?](#)
- YOUNG ACHIEVERS [12](#)
[Local spellers prepare for regional bee](#)
- YOUR SCHOOLS [12](#)
[CMS snow-day tweets exercise the brain](#)
- WEATHER GUY [12](#)
[Snow vs. sleet vs. freezing rain](#)

Save up to 50% on top brands.



DICKENS & ASSOCIATES MITCHENER
SPECIALIZING IN RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE SINCE 1991

For expert advice on buying and selling, contact Catharine Pappas at 704.661.2402 or email Relo@dmahomes.com.

MOST VIEWED

- [After comment to Gov. McCrory, Reid's cook fired](#)
- [Panthers' Cam Newton says he wants long-term deal with team](#)
- [Fightin' over moonshine recipe is classic Carolina tale](#)
- [18-month-old Union girl struck, killed by dad's vehicle](#)
- [At the NBA trade deadline: How the Charlotte Bobcats have done, what might be available](#)
- [Panthers' Steve Smith opening sports training facility](#)
- [Curtiss-Wright shifts corporate headquarters to Charlotte](#)
- [Charlotte braces for more mortgage job cuts](#)
- [UNC rebounds from slow start for 81-75 win at Florida State](#)
- [Parents advised to limit baby gear to reduce flat spots on infants' heads](#)

Find us on Facebook

Get Your Veteran ID Card

www.vetfriends.com

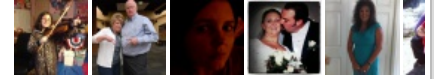
Largest US Veteran Website ID card
Benefits, discounts & service pride



The Charlotte Observer

Like

20,809 people like The Charlotte Observer.



Facebook social plugin

Recommendations

Sign Up

Create an account or [Log In](#) to see what y



Triple homicide trial gets underway in Chark
One person recommends this.



Milan underdog vs Atletico in Champions Le
One person recommends this.



Child run over by father's Jeep in Union Cour
11 people recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

Contact Us »

[Corrections](#)
[Letters to the Editor](#)
[Report a broken link](#)
[Staff Listing](#)

Submit Content

[News tips](#)

Advertise With Us »

[Classified Ads](#)
[Retail Ads](#)
[National Ads](#)
[Magazine Ads](#)
[Online Ads](#)
[Direct Marketing](#)

Online Extras

[RSS Feeds](#)
[Mobile version](#)
[Headlines Widget](#)
[Charlotte's got a lot](#)

Observer Network

[ThatsRacin.com](#)
[MomsCharlotte.com](#)
[twitter/theobserver](#)
[Observer on Facebook](#)

The Charlotte Observer

[Site Map](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

