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Issue Recently, money has proliferated politics on an unprecedented scale with a clear effect. Furthermore, less than 1% of the population contributes 68% of all election funding. This has resulted in a degradation of our government's democratic principles. Because of this problem, we must reform election campaigns. There is a strong need for public financing, particularly for judicial elections.

Project Description My project attempts to reach out to high school students, local elected officials and, to a limited extent, the general public to raise awareness about public financing of elections. Public financing provides limited campaign funds for candidates who choose to opt into the program and follow guidelines, helping to promote transparency and accessibility of elections. There is a large need for public financing in judicial elections in order to maintain the independence of the judiciary. By reaching out to high school students, I hope to reach young voters and those nearing voting age. Using the walls of the school as a message board to educate the students, I facilitated a discussion with students about the issue of money in politics and its effects. I am also writing opinion pieces and letters to the editor of local newspapers on money in politics and public financing. I am talking to my city council representative in order to push my city to join others in asking the North Carolina Assembly to authorize local public financing and initiating a letter-writing campaign with school political clubs aimed at reinstating the judicial election public financing program in North Carolina.

Project Outcome At this time, my project is underway. Students have been very interested in learning more and I've just begun. The results included an increased awareness among students and the general populace about the problem of money in politics, its effects, and what can be done to help overcome this problem. It is my hope that there is a greater push for election transparency and public financing.

Request What are some overall thoughts about the project? Positives and places for improvement? How do you think we got to where we are today with money in politics, and do you think big money is here to stay? Do you think public financing on local, state, and national levels is a feasible alternative to the system that we have currently? What are the potential obstacles to major reform?