SENATE FINANCE AND CLAIMS
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 3-4-05
BILL NO. SB 319

JUDGE LINDA McGEE
N.C. COURT OF APPEALS

P.O. BOX 888
RALEIGH, NC 27602

919-733-4228

January 31, 2005

Montana Legislature
c/o Diane Sands
Room 311
The Capitol
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Ms. Sands:

I am proud to have participated in the first program for public campaign financing in the State of North Carolina, and to have directly benefitted from using those public campaign funds to win re-election to the N.C. Court of Appeals. Long before I announced that I would seek re-election, I was a strong supporter of the legislation that would assist North Carolina in continuing to have clean, fair elections of its appellate court judges without the growing influence of well-financed special interests. When I read the strong purpose of the N.C. Public Campaign Financing Fund in the proposed legislation, it was clear to me that both judges and the voting public would benefit from this new system of funding our appellate court races.

The aspirational language is striking: "The purpose of this Article is to ensure the fairness of democratic elections in North Carolina and to protect the constitutional rights of voters and candidates from the detrimental effects of increasingly large amounts of money being raised and spent to influence the outcome of elections, those effects being especially problematic in elections of the judiciary, since impartiality is uniquely important to the integrity and credibility of the courts." There was no question that I would certainly participate in the new public campaign financing program as an important part of my re-election campaign. Almost every appellate court candidate - both Democrat and Republican - chose to participate in this exciting new opportunity. As with any new procedure, there

were challenges, but they were effectively overcome because there was such confidence in this innovation.

I spent a great deal of campaign time informing the voters about how they could personally participate in the fund. As a result, there was more interest in my campaign and more contributors to my campaign than ever before, since every voter could contribute as little as $10.00. Once my campaign raised the required funds to qualify for public financing, I was then free to spend the remainder of the campaign focusing on my record and my qualifications - and not on fund-raising.

A major improvement in the legislation provided that, for the first time, a voter guide about appellate court candidates be mailed to voters across the state. The voter guide gave voters valuable information about each of the judges so that the voters could make an informed choice in casting their votes. There was more interest in judicial races when voters were better informed and felt more directly involved. In the past, voters often simply did not vote for judges because they had no effective way of knowing who was qualified and who was not. Public campaign financing in judicial races has provided better information to voters which has resulted in greater involvement by voters in judicial races, and which should continue to contribute to the election of capable, fair judges.

Very truly yours,

Linda McGee

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