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## **EVANS' CAMPAIGN FINANCE LEGISLATION PASSES HOUSE**

Bill to overhaul Philly campaign laws heads to Senate

**HARRISBURG (March 21)** – A legislative proposal to overhaul campaign finance rules in Philadelphia passed the state House today after Representative Dwight Evans told fellow lawmakers that the legislation, demanded by Philadelphia's citizens, will better the election process in the state's largest city.

The measure, House Bill 116, was approved by a vote of 112 to 84. It now moves to the Senate. The bill would enable Philadelphia to enact a finance system exclusive to its municipal elections and would allow the city to provide a system of limits or public financing.

"For several years now, I have argued the laws governing campaign finance in Philadelphia are fundamentally flawed," said Evans, D-Phila., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. , "We have a campaign finance ordinance in Philadelphia, but the situation is so murky, even the courts have been unable to sort it out. This legislation is an appropriate measure to provide an equitable and transparent campaign finance system in Philadelphia."

Evans was able to fight off several attempts to derail the legislation by lawmakers who wanted to declare it unconstitutional or who wanted to change it so state lawmakers, not Philadelphia citizens, maintained control over the elections in Philadelphia.

The legislation was supported by Governor Edward G. Rendell and several organizations including the Philadelphia City Council, Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, the Committee of Seventy, the NAACP and the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Council.

“It is no secret that Philadelphia elections have been mired in a pay-to-play mentality for far too long. I am confident the Senate will pass the bill and it will be signed into law by Governor Rendell.”

In 2003, Philadelphia adopted a campaign finance reform law restricting individuals from donating more than \$5,000 annually to a candidate and restricts political committees from donating more than \$20,000 annually.

The law was challenged in Common Pleas Court and in December, Judge Alan L. Tereshko said only the state could regulate campaign spending. Pennsylvania does not limit contributions to any candidates. City attorneys appealed that decision. On March 7, Commonwealth Court held a hearing on the validity of Philadelphia’s campaign-finance law, but has yet to rule.

Evans’ said he is not alone in his frustration over the amount of money needed to run campaigns. Candidates at all levels, he said, find themselves spending so much time asking for money to support their campaigns, they have little time to talk about issues, a situation that doesn’t bode well for the electoral process.

“I don’t believe the founders of this great nation would be pleased to see how we conduct elections today,” Evans said. “The public good is best served when campaigns are focused on ideas, not income. If you look to our history, you’ll see some of our greatest leaders have come from humble means. Philadelphia is the seat of this nation’s birth and as we move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I believe it will be the people of Philadelphia who set the example for the whole nation about how we conduct elections – using a financing system that levels the playing field for each candidate.

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For more information about Dwight Evans’ legislative initiatives, visit the website [www.pahouse.net/evans](http://www.pahouse.net/evans). For more information about the House Appropriations Committee, visit the website [www.hacd.net](http://www.hacd.net)