



Colorado Latino Forum Backs 71% of Voters of the Fair Elections Fund

For immediate press release:

71% of Denver voters approved to allocate public funds for grassroots candidate campaigns in order to create an equitable playing field with corporate backed candidates. This voter-approved program is called the Fair Elections Fund. With Mayor Hancock's encouragement, Councilman Kevin Flynn filed a bill last week Thursday to cut the funding from the Fair Elections Fund, which is only in its first year of operation, and proposed to take 100% of a full year of funding for the protection of other much needed programming. However, Denver voters made it overwhelmingly clear that they wanted to see change in behavior from people during the election process and approved the Fair Elections program.

These same voters and community were not engaged on this solution. When pressed at a registered neighborhood organization meeting Saturday it became clear that community engagement on this important citizen-led initiative wasn't on Flynn's list of things to do. In this same conversation it became clear there is no plan to repay this fund that doesn't require budget cuts somewhere else next year. Why not make the cuts now instead?

From the beginning of this pandemic, City of Denver constituents have also made it clear that they seek to have city council allocate funding from the Public Safety budget, which takes approximately forty-percent (40%) of the city budget as a whole, to much needed programming such as the STAR safety program, housing for unhoused neighbors, parks and recreation, public library resources and others. Flynn's bill does not assure constituents that 75% of the full one-year fund will be restored by 2022-2023 because the numbers do not add up and carry a flimsy commitment of doing so.

It also appears that Flynn and city council members, that are considering support for this bill, tend to the insulated place they hold as incumbents rather than tending to the will of the people. The mayor and those city council people supporting this bill appear to fear a fair election, so much so, that they would rather force the belief that every other alternative they have will present a negative budgetary consequence when that is not the case. The opportunities for funding allocation from the Public Safety budget has been there all along, without negative recourse to the number of officers available to the public, and yet certain city council members chose to miss that opportunity.

"As a former candidate and supporter of grassroots democracy, the actions of the Mayor and the 'incumbents' is tantamount to politically taking grassroots candidates out at the knees. It also tells me they are running scared. This fund was supported by a large majority of Denverites, calling out for more than the same old candidates and politics as usual... wanting to make our elections fair and accessible for candidates of all walks of life." - Annie Martínez, Esq., M.S., President of the Colorado Hispanic Bar Association and CLF Board member

"Eliminating the fund outside of extreme budgetary issues should be a conflict of interest. This is protecting incumbency behind a facade of fiscal responsibility." - Juan Marcano, Aurora City Council member and CLF Board member

Supporters claim that the fund will be sufficient for the next election cycle but unfortunately these numbers will not be made public until tomorrow, after a request by CLF for this analysis to be made public. CLF remains skeptical of analysis that is done in the dark without community engagement. CLF firmly believes more funds will be required than ever before due to the increase in civic engagement. With so many open seats and the world in disrepair, it is clear that more grassroots candidates will step up to run for office.

Flynn direct-filed the bill in coordination with Hancock to the City Council meeting to take place Monday, October 26, 2020 without conducting any community outreach. CLF urges the city council to vote against this proposal and to carry out the will of the people. Flynn's action threatens the will of 71% of the voters that expect equity for marginalized candidates. CLF urges the city council to continue the programming of the Fair Elections Fund and do more research in allocating from the Public Safety budget to fund worthy, needed programs.

Signed,
Board of the Colorado Latino Forum

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