

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER CITY
CANDIDATE INTEGRITY PLEDGE
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is such a Pledge necessary or desirable? We've never had one before.
 - A. Our objective is simply stated in the Pledge: to ensure that Falls Church City elections remain local, accessible to all citizens and affordable. Since its founding, our City has been quite fortunate to have had a history of spirited yet civil elections. Due to the relatively modest cost of conducting campaigns and reliance on neighbors and friends to support candidates, seeking office has been open to most citizens who seek to serve. In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic increase in funding of local races fueled by partisan, national special interests. With this Pledge, we hope that candidates will continue to resist such efforts and help Falls Church retain its "special sauce."
2. As I read this Pledge, why is there no mention of limits on campaign contribution that a candidate can accept?
 - A. According to Virginia law, there are no such limits on candidates and, therefore, this Pledge cannot impose them.
3. What then, prevents a candidate from accepting large, special interest donations from anyone they choose rather than "... only contributions from those residing within our borders, with the exception...of longtime family and friends."?
 - A. Nothing, except candidates' willingness to break their own pledge and willfully violate something they have attested to at the outset of their campaigns. While there is no legal limit on campaign contributions, one of the intended effects of the Pledge would be to prevent an "arms race" in fund raising.
4. Why not refuse to sign the Pledge?
 - A. Candidates who refuse to sign such a good-spirited pledge will undoubtedly find themselves explaining their decision in candidate forums and while seeking the endorsement of others, including local civic and news organizations. In the end, voters hold the final say in approving or disapproving a candidate's decision not to sign the Pledge.
5. Is it possible with the presence of the Pledge that more candidates might be encouraged to seek office in Falls Church City?
 - A. Yes. It is possible that citizens will do so based on the understanding that, with their fellow candidates signing the Pledge, campaigns will remain affordable, within reach, and relatively free of negative campaigning. The Pledge offers no guarantees except the word of candidates that they will do their best to uphold the spirit of its provisions..
6. Will compliance with the Pledge be monitored?

A. Yes. CBC will establish a Campaign Integrity Pledge Monitoring Committee to review candidate contributions based on required Virginia reporting procedures. The Committee's intent will be to ensure that contributions align with the Pledge's provisions.

7. I am a first-time candidate and my sister in Denver is insisting on giving me \$20,000 for my race for the Falls Church City Council. Can I accept her generosity?

A. Yes. There is nothing in the letter of the Pledge that calls on you to reject your sister's generosity. However, as this question implies, it certainly violates the Pledge's spirit. CBC believes that with only a fraction of that contribution and a commitment by your sister (and other family members) to visit for a weekend or two and commit to each knocking on 200 doors on your behalf, she will assist you much more than such a large contribution

8. I'm considering a run for city-wide office in the next year or so; how much does it cost to wage a campaign in Falls Church City?

A. In recent elections since 2015, the average candidate has raised \$7,075 for their School Board races and \$7,089 for City Council. Many of our candidates have found that shoe leather – their own as well as family and friends – is the most important investment they can make in their campaigns. Word of mouth and personal visibility at civic events has often translated into enough funding to put candidates in the win column.

9. I'm concerned that anyone who has the ability to raise unforeseen sums of money for a city-wide office can still do so, even after signing the Pledge – is that true?

A. Yes, but the likelihood that they will withstand the scrutiny of other candidates, countless civic organizations, and local media attention minimizes the probability of success at the polls; not to mention the approbation they would receive from family and friends for violating the spirit of the document to which they had affixed their name. The Pledge is a good faith effort to maintain the public spirited character of our community while keeping the doors open to everyone – regardless of means – to seek and hold city-wide office.