

Public Financing Of Elections Wins Key Test in Senate

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WASHINGTON, March 27—

A proposal to finance Presidential and Congressional election campaigns with public tax funds won on a key test vote in the Senate today.

By a vote of 61 to 33, the Senate rejected an attempt by Senator James B. Allen, Democrat of Alabama, to delete the public financing provision from a campaign reform bill.

The margin of the vote encouraged supporters of public financing. But they face what is expected to be a long floor battle—and a filibuster from Senator Allen and other opponents who plan to offer numerous other amendments to scuttle or reduce the public funds for campaigning.

The Senate adjourned for the day at 5:07 P.M. without any additional votes, to allow Republican Senators to attend a \$1,000-a-plate fund-raising dinner tonight to help finance this fall's Senate and House campaigns.

Even if the Senate eventually approves a public financing measure, the Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, acknowledged to reporters earlier today, the prospects do not "look too good that such a measure would be enacted into law this year."

"But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try," he added.

Mr. Mansfield noted that

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President Nixon was expected to veto any such measure, "and then we have the House to contend with." Many House members oppose giving public campaign funds to their election opponents.

Except for the public financing provision, the bill is similar to a measure passed by the Senate last July that would have imposed strict limits on private contributions and expenditures in campaigns for Federal office.

Both measures were aimed at curbing some of the abuses brought to light in the Watergate investigations, but the House Administration Committee has not yet completed action on its version of a bill limiting contributions and spending.

Under the public financing section, which would take effect in 1976, candidates in the Presidential primaries would receive Federal funds to match small private contributions after the candidates who initially raised \$250,000 on their own in contributions of \$250 or less.

Senate candidates in primary elections would have to raise varying amounts up to a maximum of \$125,000 depending on the voting population in their states, in contributions of \$100 or less to be eligible for the Federal matching funds.

Candidates for the House would have to raise \$10,000 before public funds could match their contributions.

In the general election the nominees of the major parties would be eligible for Federal

payments equal to their overall spending limits for President, the Senate and the House.

However, the nominees would have the option of taking all, part or none of the public funds. For example, a candidate could choose to take only half the public funds to which he was entitled and raise the other half up to his spending limit through allowable private contributions.

The spending limits would range from about \$21-million for a Presidential general election campaign down to \$90,000 for a House race and the public funds would be raised by the checkoff—currently \$1 for an individual and \$2 for a couple—on the Federal income tax returns.

Today's Senate debate was dominated by opponents of public financing. Senator Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the Republican whip, said the taxpayers would not stand for their money going to subsidize candidates.

"This is no reform," he said. "I see it as a shocking way of raiding the public Treasury."

The 61 to 33 test vote was two short of the two-thirds vote that would be needed to shut off debate on the campaign bill, and a lobbyist for Common Cause, the self-styled citizens lobby campaigning for public financing, said he thought there was "a very good 'shot' at eventually closing the debate.

In other action today, the Senate tabled, or postponed consideration of another amendment that would have cut the Federal subsidies in general elections to 50 per cent of the over-all spending ceilings. The vote was 74 to 19.

The Senate also agreed to strip from the bill a section that would have doubled the checkoff on the income tax returns to \$2 for an individual return and to \$4 for a joint return. That action will be considered at a separate bill by the Senate Finance Committee.