



NEWS RELEASE

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Former Governor Whitman Backs Disclosure for Independent Spenders and Maintaining Public Funds for Gubernatorial Candidates

Former Governor Christine Todd Whitman said she strongly supports expanded public disclosure by special interest groups that are spending fast-rising sums on New Jersey elections independently of parties or candidates.

“...to allow them to raise that money without having to disclose in the same time frame that a candidate has to disclose is just wrong. People should know because it makes a difference,” Whitman said during a June 3, 2022 interview with ELEC Executive Director Jeff Brindle.

“It makes the difference when you know it's a Citizens for Green Grass and then you find out it's a big oil company. Yeah, but they use that nice name, right? People just get confused...(anonymity) allows them to have an influence that they should not otherwise have,” she said.

While Whitman was speaking generally about the need for disclosure by independent groups, legislation is pending in both houses (S-2866/A4372) that includes this among its changes to campaign finance law.

Whitman is the eighth person to participate in an ongoing project entitled “History of the NJ Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).” Full interviews can be viewed on ELEC’s website at:

https://www.elec.nj.gov/aboutelec/ELEC_OralHistory.htm.

Whitman, a Republican, became governor when she defeated Democratic incumbent Jim Florio in 1993. She ran for reelection and won in 1997. She resigned on January 31, 2001 to become the ninth administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under President George W. Bush.

During both gubernatorial runs, Whitman participated in an ELEC program that furnishes public funds to candidates for governor who agree to limit their spending. The program began in 1977 and has become a national model for several other states.

Whitman continues to believe the program is important even in the Super PAC era.

“I think it's critical because it does limit the amount of money that you get from other people and that you can spend, basically,” she said.

“...taking the public funds was a way to assure the voting public that there were limits here and that you weren't going to be beholden to any one particular group of people who had given you the most money, and

therefore that industry or that lobbying group was going to really call the shots and you had to pay attention to them more than you would have otherwise,” Whitman said.

“I believe it's important, and I think it is a measure of trust that you can establish with the public. So I've always been a big supporter of that,” she added.

In 1998, Whitman approved a \$1 million special appropriation for ELEC- \$1.8 million in current dollars- that enabled a major upgrade of its website. The overhaul made it easier for the public to search for information about candidates, parties, political action committees and lobbyists.

She said she had no hesitation.

“We believed in ELEC. I think there’s nothing more important than the public confidence in our electoral system,” Whitman said. “We lose that without non-partisan ELECs of the world.”

One Whitman-enacted bill that the Commission helps enforce is a 1995 bill that expanded the citizen right to recall to more elected offices.

Before the bill became law, only local officials were subject to recall. Whitman’s bill added governors and state legislators.

While no governor or sitting legislator has yet been ousted as a result of a recall election, Whitman believes it gives public officials another reason not to abuse their power.

“The fact that it is there it is somewhat of a warning and a little bit of a guardrail against some behavior,” she said.

The History of the Commission Project Archive:

- [Volume I – Interview with ELEC Chairman Eric Jaso- 2017-Present](#)▶
- [Volume II – Interview with former ELEC Executive Director Lewis Thurston- 1976 -1981](#)▶
- [Volume III – Interview with former State Assembly Speaker Joe Roberts- 2006-2009](#)▶
- [Volume IV – Interview with former New Jersey Governor Thomas H. Kean 1982-1990](#)▶
- [Volume V – Interview with former New Jersey State Senate President John Lynch- 1989-1991](#)▶
- [Volume VI – Interview with former ELEC Chairman Ron DeFilippis- 2010-2017](#)▶
- [Volume VII – Interview with former ELEC Chairwoman Jerry English- 2004-2010](#)

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