



Spring 2012 Election Law Symposium

Money in Judicial Elections

During the last decade, the face of state judicial elections has transformed. Between 2000-2009, campaign spending for State Supreme Court judicial elections more than doubled, with contests marked by a surge in large donors, special interest group participation, and aggressive campaigning. This massive influx of money in judicial elections has raised many issues surrounding campaign finance, candidate speech, judicial independence, and recusal.

In its Spring 2012 Symposium, to be held in March, the Election Law Program and its student arm, the Election Law Society, will bring together a panel of experts including judges, political strategists, members of the policy community, journalists, and scholars to share their professional and personal experiences on the subject of the role of money in judicial elections. Questions addressed will include:

- *In what practical ways has the surge of money into judicial elections changed the execution of judicial campaigns for candidates, interested parties, and constituents?*
- *What political and social currents have prompted increased spending in judicial elections?*
- *How have recent changes in campaign finance law – notably the 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* – affected money in judicial elections?*
- *How should states balance protecting political free speech – by both judicial candidates and their donors – with societal interests of an independent judiciary?*
- *How should elected judges best balance their obligation to political campaign donors with the responsibility to maintain judicial independence?*
- *What is the impact of increased judicial campaign spending on the legacy of *Caperton v. Massey*? How does money in judicial elections impact recusal ethics?*
- *Finally, will the wave of money in judicial elections change their nature? Are reforms necessary, and if so, what specific reforms are most needed?*