



# Campaign Finance

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.*

*And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- A total of almost [\\$1.8 billion was spent on political advertising](#) during the 2020 Presidential General Election.
- [Once an individual has raised or spent more than \\$5,000](#), he or she must register with the Federal FEC as a candidate and transfer funds into a campaign account, whose funds will be disclosed.
- The [share of women](#) giving at least \$200 to political campaigns rose to over 43% during the 2020 election cycle after never rising higher than 28% during the 1990s.

## Let's discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** What is the balance between protecting against corruption and ensuring people have the unhindered ability to participate in political campaigns?
- **Government:** What is the purpose of money in politics? Does money matter in political campaigns?
- **Business:** Should different businesses, companies, and nonprofits be treated differently in terms of campaign finance disclosure?

## Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** about how campaign finance affects your community. Consider hosting a conversation with local election officials
2. **Explore the impact of legislation related to elections and election integrity in your community.** You can search for campaign finance laws in your state with [Ballotpedia's map](#) and [Campaign Finance Institute's State Law Database](#).
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. Search on your state or municipality's website for your *Election Division* or *Division of Elections*, usually under the Secretary of State or Department of State. You can contact your [State or Local Election Office](#) and see how your [state and local election officials](#) are chosen.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on campaign finance, and their vision for how to tackle related election challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on campaign finance in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [Election Integrity](#)
  - [U.S. Senate](#)
  - [U.S. House of Representatives](#)
  - [Free Speech](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.