

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1613

To direct the Federal Election Commission to carry out a voucher pilot program under which individuals may use vouchers to make small dollar contributions to qualified candidates for election for the office of Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 2019

Ms. JAYAPAL (for herself and Ms. DELBENE) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To direct the Federal Election Commission to carry out a voucher pilot program under which individuals may use vouchers to make small dollar contributions to qualified candidates for election for the office of Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Democracy Dollars
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROGRAM.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Federal Election Com-
3 mission (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Commis-
4 sion”) shall establish a pilot program under which the
5 Commission shall select 3 eligible States to operate a
6 voucher pilot program which is described in section 3 dur-
7 ing the program operation period.

8 (b) ELIGIBILITY OF STATES.—A State is eligible to
9 be selected to operate a voucher pilot program under this
10 Act if, not later than 180 days after the beginning of the
11 program application period, the State submits to the Com-
12 mission an application containing—

13 (1) information and assurances that the State
14 will operate a voucher program which contains the
15 elements described in section 3(a);

16 (2) information and assurances that the State
17 will establish fraud prevention mechanisms described
18 in section 3(b);

19 (3) information and assurances that the State
20 will establish a commission to oversee and implement
21 the program as described in section 3(c);

22 (4) information and assurances that the State
23 will carry out a public information campaign as de-
24 scribed in section 3(d);

25 (5) information and assurances that the State
26 will submit reports as required under section 4; and

1 (6) such other information and assurances as
2 the Commission may require.

3 (c) SELECTION OF PARTICIPATING STATES.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
5 the beginning of the program application period, the
6 Commission shall select the 3 States which will oper-
7 ate voucher pilot programs under this Act.

8 (2) CRITERIA.—In selecting States for the oper-
9 ation of the voucher pilot programs under this Act,
10 the Commission shall apply such criteria and metrics
11 as the Commission considers appropriate to deter-
12 mine the ability of a State to operate the program
13 successfully, and shall attempt to select States in a
14 variety of geographic regions and with a variety of
15 political party preferences.

16 (3) NO SUPERMAJORITY REQUIRED FOR SELEC-
17 TION.—The selection of States by the Commission
18 under this subsection shall require the approval of
19 only half of the Members of the Commission.

20 (d) DUTIES OF STATES DURING PROGRAM PREPARA-
21 TION PERIOD.—During the program preparation period,
22 each State selected to operate a voucher pilot program
23 under this Act shall take such actions as may be necessary
24 to ensure that the State will be ready to operate the pro-
25 gram during the program operation period, and shall com-

1 plete such actions not later than 90 days before the begin-
 2 ning of the program operation period.

3 (e) TERMINATION.—Each voucher pilot program
 4 under this Act shall terminate as of the first day after
 5 the program operation period.

6 (f) REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS.—Upon receiving the
 7 report submitted by a State under section 4(a) with re-
 8 spect to an election cycle, the Commission shall transmit
 9 a payment to the State in an amount equal to the reason-
 10 able costs incurred by the State in operating the voucher
 11 pilot program under this Act during the cycle.

12 **SEC. 3. VOUCHER PROGRAM DESCRIBED.**

13 (a) GENERAL ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM.—

14 (1) ELEMENTS DESCRIBED.—The elements of a
 15 voucher pilot program operated by a State under
 16 this Act are as follows:

17 (A) The State shall provide each qualified
 18 individual upon the individual's request with a
 19 voucher worth \$25 to be known as a “My Voice
 20 Voucher” during the election cycle which will be
 21 assigned a routing number and which at the op-
 22 tion of the individual will be provided in either
 23 paper or electronic form.

24 (B) Using the routing number assigned to
 25 the My Voice Voucher, the individual may sub-

1 mit the My Voice Voucher in either electronic
2 or paper form to qualified candidates for elec-
3 tion for the office of Representative in, or Dele-
4 gate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress
5 and allocate such portion of the value of the My
6 Voice Voucher in increments of \$5 as the indi-
7 vidual may select to any such candidate.

8 (C) If the candidate transmits the My
9 Voice Voucher to the Commission, the Commis-
10 sion shall pay the candidate the portion of the
11 value of the My Voice Voucher that the indi-
12 vidual allocated to the candidate, which shall be
13 considered a contribution by the individual to
14 the candidate for purposes of the Federal Elec-
15 tion Campaign Act of 1971.

16 (2) DESIGNATION OF QUALIFIED INDIVID-
17 UALS.—For purposes of paragraph (1)(A), a “quali-
18 fied individual” with respect to a State means an in-
19 dividual—

20 (A) who is a resident of the State;

21 (B) who will be of voting age as of the
22 date of the election for the candidate to whom
23 the individual submits a My Voice Voucher; and

1 (C) who is not prohibited under Federal
2 law from making contributions to candidates
3 for election for Federal office.

4 (3) TREATMENT AS CONTRIBUTION TO CAN-
5 DIDATE.—For purposes of the Federal Election
6 Campaign Act of 1971, the submission of a My
7 Voice Voucher to a candidate by an individual shall
8 be treated as a contribution to the candidate by the
9 individual in the amount of the portion of the value
10 of the Voucher that the individual allocated to the
11 candidate.

12 (b) FRAUD PREVENTION MECHANISM.—In addition
13 to the elements described in subsection (a), a State oper-
14 ating a voucher pilot program under this Act shall permit
15 an individual to revoke a My Voice Voucher not later than
16 2 days after submitting the My Voice Voucher to a can-
17 didate.

18 (c) OVERSIGHT COMMISSION.—In addition to the ele-
19 ments described in subsection (a), a State operating a
20 voucher pilot program under this Act shall establish a
21 commission or designate an existing entity to oversee and
22 implement the program in the State, except that no such
23 commission or entity may be comprised of elected officials.

24 (d) PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN.—In addition
25 to the elements described in subsection (a), a State oper-

1 ating a voucher pilot program under this Act shall carry
2 out a public information campaign to disseminate aware-
3 ness of the program among qualified individuals.

4 **SEC. 4. REPORTS.**

5 (a) PRELIMINARY REPORT.—Not later than 6
6 months after the first election cycle of the program oper-
7 ation period, a State which operates a voucher pilot pro-
8 gram under this Act shall submit a report to the Commis-
9 sion analyzing the operation and effectiveness of the pro-
10 gram during the cycle and including such other informa-
11 tion as the Commission may require.

12 (b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after
13 the end of the program operation period, the State shall
14 submit a final report to the Commission analyzing the op-
15 eration and effectiveness of the program and including
16 such other information as the Commission may require.

17 (c) REPORT BY COMMISSION.—Not later than the
18 end of the first election cycle which begins after the pro-
19 gram operation period, the Commission shall submit a re-
20 port to Congress which summarizes and analyzes the re-
21 sults of the voucher pilot program, and shall include in
22 the report such recommendations as the Commission con-
23 siders appropriate regarding the expansion of the pilot
24 program to all States and territories, along with such

1 other recommendations and other information as the Com-
 2 mission considers appropriate.

3 **SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.**

4 (a) **ELECTION CYCLE.**—In this Act, the term “elec-
 5 tion cycle” means the period beginning on the day after
 6 the date of the most recent regularly scheduled general
 7 election for Federal office and ending on the date of the
 8 next regularly scheduled general election for Federal of-
 9 fice.

10 (b) **DEFINITIONS RELATING TO PERIODS.**—In this
 11 Act, the following definitions apply:

12 (1) **PROGRAM APPLICATION PERIOD.**—The term
 13 “program application period” means the first elec-
 14 tion cycle which begins after the date of the enact-
 15 ment of this Act.

16 (2) **PROGRAM PREPARATION PERIOD.**—The
 17 term “program preparation period” means the first
 18 election cycle which begins after the program appli-
 19 cation period.

20 (3) **PROGRAM OPERATION PERIOD.**—The term
 21 “program operation period” means the first 2 elec-
 22 tion cycles which begin after the program prepara-
 23 tion period.

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