

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 18, 2018 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

POSTER SESSION 3

Commons West, Easel 10

2:30 PM to 4:00 PM

Moving Past Multiple-Matching Funds: A First Look at the Efficacy of the Seattle Democracy Voucher Program

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Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

Past research shows that white and wealthy men are the most prevalent donors to local and state political campaigns, maintaining political influence through ineffectively regulated systems thereby threatening the quality of American democracy. As regulation-based campaign finance reform has been unable to mitigate the influence of large donors in local campaigns, city councils and grassroots organizations have started to present incentive-based policies to provide average Americans with the means to donate, though few have actually implemented them. Budding reforms like that of the Democracy Voucher program in Seattle, though showing promise, demand the attention of researchers to analyze their efficacy. Through comparing both the demographics and the histories of political engagement between donors, program participants, and other voters, this study seeks to determine the initial success of the Democracy Voucher program in Seattle. It concludes that one can observe a minimal increase in donors and more diverse donors, suggesting that the Voucher Program was marginally effective in achieving its goals of diversifying the donor pool. This research contributes to the literature available to policy makers and other researchers interested in developing public campaign financing reforms at the municipal and, potentially, state level.