



PRESS RELEASE

July 15, 2019

Contact: Anna Kellar

[anna@democracymaine.org](mailto:anna@democracymaine.org) | 207-831-6223

### **Portland Mayoral Candidates Obliterate Previous Fundraising Pace**

PORTLAND, ME – Campaign finance reports released today reveal that the top three mayoral candidates have combined to raise more than \$200,000 with more than four months remaining in the campaign.

This level of fundraising shatters previous records. The three 2015 mayoral candidates raised a combined total of just \$700 in the same period.

“Local elections should be about people, not money. This explosion in fundraising is an out-of-control arms race, and threatens to change something that is very special about Portland politics,” said Anna Kellar, spokesperson for Fair Elections Portland.

Additionally, the \$200,000+ raised by Kate Snyder, Ethan Strimling, and Spencer Thibodeau already surpasses the total amount of money raised throughout the entire 2015 mayoral race (just over \$182,000). The 2011 record of just over \$300,000 -- when 15 candidates vied for the office -- is also likely to fall.

This explosion of fundraising is not just a problem at the mayoral level, however. Fundraising by city council and school board candidates has also increased dramatically during the past ten local election cycles.

For instance, the three candidates in the 2017 at-large city council election combined to raise more than \$90,000, while 2018’s District 2 school board race cost nearly \$25,000. Both of these fundraising totals smashed previous fundraising records for the respective offices. The graph below shows this stark upward trend in fundraising by non-mayoral municipal candidates.



“When raising big dollars is a requirement of running for office, our democracy is closed to good ideas and hard-working fellow Portlanders who can’t – or won’t – engage in dialing for dollars. We need to change this,” said Kellar.

This increased level of fundraising for all municipal offices threatens to distort Portland’s local democracy and deter average Portlanders, who are not connected enough to raise large amounts of money, from running for office and bringing fresh perspectives to City Hall.

Kellar added, “These disclosure reports confirm what people have been telling us: there is too much money in our local elections, which is preventing us from having a democracy that is fair to all residents. Portland needs a public campaign funding option, such as the Clean Elections program available to candidates for the Maine legislature.”

Ranked-choice voting is also coming into sharp focus during this election. “With four candidates in the mayoral race [including newcomer Thaddeus St. John], voters really appreciate being able to rank their candidates without fear of a spoiler,” Kellar noted. “We want to extend that opportunity to other city elections as well.”

Fair Elections Portland is gathering signatures for two charter amendments – one for public funding of municipal campaigns and a second to expand ranked choice voting to city council and

school board elections. The campaign can be reached at 207-831-6223 or by emailing [info@fairelectionsportland.org](mailto:info@fairelectionsportland.org).