**S0752 Senturia, Ben (1943- ), Campaign Finance Reform, Records, 1975-2000**

325 Folders, 60 Photographs

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Related Collections:
S0056 Missouri Campaign Spending Reform Records, 1969-1977  
S0745 Senturia, Ben (1943- ), Papers, 1976-1987  

Ben Senturia donated these papers to the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 2002 and 2004. Senator Joan Bray, Missouri Senate, also donated material for this collection in 2004.

Native St. Louisian Ben Senturia has described himself as an activist and grassroots organizer. Between 1967 and 1992 he served as political education director in regional environmental and political reform affairs. Senturia formed the Center for Active Citizenship (CAC) in 1989 as a privately incorporated consultancy firm aiding non-governmental groups. In particular, the CAC provided advice and services to Missouri groups working to reform campaign financing through the 1990s. Additionally, Senturia served as a consultant and officer for national organizations advocating regulation of campaign financing at the federal level. Both state and national organizations campaigned to replace private funding of election campaigns with public money. The Collection includes records from the Center for Active Citizenship and a selection of campaign finance reform material from many states. Also included are records from two national reform organizations Senturia served with, the Working Group on Electoral Democracy (WGED) and The Center for Responsive Politics (CRP). Finally, Senturia, through the CAC, provided advice and direction for three Missouri reform groups: Missouri Alliance for Campaign Reform (MACR), Missouri Voters for Fair Elections (MVFE), and Missouri Voters for Clean Elections (MVCE).

**SERIES DESCRIPTION**

**SERIES 1 CENTER FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP, 1989-2000, FOLDERS 1-20**

Ben Senturia incorporated the Center for Active Citizenship in 1989 to provide advice and guidance to non-governmental groups, organized labor, and political organizations other than the established political parties. As noted above, for much of the 1990s, the CAC was most actively involved in the quest for campaign finance reform. Reformers worked first to limit the amount and type of private contributions to political candidates and parties, and then more drastically, to enact full public financing of political campaigns, referred to by reformers as democratically financed elections. Since 2000, Senturia has continued through CAC to advise citizen groups in how to organize themselves, raise funds, and initiate petition drives, in order to influence political parties and public policy, especially in reference to
campaign finance reform and environmentalism.

SERIES 2 WORKING GROUP ON ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY (WGED), 1987-1999, FOLDERS 21-50

Ben Senturia joined with activist Randy Kehler in the late 1980s to organize an activist group that would work to establish publically supported campaign financing. (Senturia and Kehler shared the leadership of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign in the mid-1980s.) Senturia and Kehler wanted to organize an activist group that would work to reform campaign financing. They established the Study Group on Electoral Democracy in 1987 as a think tank that welcomed ideas from activist groups and individuals from across the United States. They changed the organization's name to Working Group on Electoral Democracy in 1990. WGED was a national organization that worked in several states to enact public financial support of elections. It also sponsored regional meetings to discuss campaign finance reform and supported petition initiatives and election efforts in several states. Through Ben Senturia, the WGED took part in efforts to reform campaign financing in Missouri.

SERIES 3 CENTER FOR RESPONSIVE POLITICS (CRP), 1989-1997, FOLDERS 51-64

Activist Ellen Miller organized the Center for Responsive Politics in the late 1980s as another advocate for campaign finance reform and publically supported elections. The Center, located in Washington, DC, conducted and published research on how political campaigns were financed, organized regional conferences to organize campaign finance reform in the states, and lobbied the U.S. Congress for national campaign finance reform. Miller corresponded regularly with Ben Senturia and Randy Kehler for ideas to further her cause, and included both men in many of CRP's regional conferences.

SERIES 4 MISSOURI ALLIANCE FOR CAMPAIGN REFORM (MACR), 1993-1998, FOLDERS 65-90

Ben Senturia and other Missouri political reformers incorporated the Missouri Alliance for Campaign Finance Reform Education Fund in late 1996, with the purpose of educating the public about the need to restore democratic principles to Missouri elections. As president of MACR, Senturia directed a statewide organization of social reform groups, political reform groups, labor unions, and other activist groups. Member groups included: the League of Women Voters, MOPIRG, ACORN, WGED, Missouri Council of Senior Citizens, and Church Women United in Missouri, among others. MACR ardently supported campaign finance reform in Missouri from 1994 through 1998. It was particularly active in winning statewide support for Proposition B in 1998. Ben Senturia played a major role in organizing that effort.

SERIES 5 MISSOURI VOTERS FOR CLEAN ELECTIONS (MVCE), 1997-1998 FOLDERS 91-120

Missouri Alliance for Campaign Reform established Missouri Voters for Clean Elections in February 1998 to operate an initiative petition campaign. The petition, if approved, would enact a campaign finance law that would use public funds to support election campaigns.
MVCE hired Kaia Lenhart to direct the campaign effort. The organization successfully gathered enough signatures from the drive to place the initiative on the ballot but decided not to support the initiative in the fall election because it lacked the money to run a campaign. Business organizations and conservative groups raised far more money to oppose the initiative than MVCE could collect.

SERIES 6 MISSOURI VOTERS FOR FAIR ELECTIONS (MVFE), 1998-2000, FOLDERS 121-143

Following the failure to enact a campaign finance reform bill by initiative in 1998, MACR replaced Missouri Voters for Clean Elections with a new initiative effort called Missouri Voters for Fair Elections in 1999.' MVFE set to work in Fall 1999 to place Proposition B on the 2000 election ballot. Proposition B proposed to provide public funding for election campaigns to candidates who voluntarily agreed NOT to accept private support for their campaigns. While MVFE successfully placed the initiative on the ballot the proposal was soundly rejected, 65% of the voters saying no.

SERIES 7 CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM (CFR) ALPHABETICAL FILE, 1986-2000, FOLDERS 144-322

Senturia regularly collected information from a variety of sources during these years. Series 7 makes up over half of the material in this collection, much of it coming from state efforts to reform campaign finance laws. Senturia was a diligent collector and it is not always clear the exact source of the material he has gathered. Nonetheless, Series 7 offers a wealth of material on the nationwide effort to reform campaign finance during the 1990s.

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