

The People's Initiative – I-1071 Let's tear up the blank check!

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Note: I presented a slight abridgment of this talk at the Bellevue Tea Party rally on 2010-04-15.

Let's suppose the following. You hire someone to remodel your home, and when they arrive to go to work, you hand them a blank check, and you tell them to draw what they need. Is this how you pay people that you hire? How many of you operate this way — please raise your hands.

Now suppose that I tell you that this is this how I pay people that I hire — I give them a blank check. How many of you would think that I'm crazy? Raise your hands.

Well, I have news for you: this is how we citizens pay our governments — city, county, state, federal. We give the government a blank check, allowing the legislature to take as much of our money as it wants, whether it does so by a majority vote or a 2/3 vote. *This is why a representative government is fiscally irresponsible!* The fundamental problem is *not the people* in the government. The fundamental problem is *a structural defect* in the government.

Structural defect

To make the defect graphic, suppose that when your family needs more money, you gather them around the dinner table and you entertain motions for more money just as a legislature does. "Uh, there's a motion for \$10,000. Oh, there's a motion for \$50,000. Now there's a motion for \$100,000. Is there a second? The motion for \$100,000 has been seconded. Discussion? No discussion! All in favor say "Aye!" *The ayes have it, giving our family \$100,000!*

Does this make any sense to you? No, of course not. But this is the way that a representative government works, *and it's just as crazy as it sounds!* You and I must operate by the principle "no pain, no gain", and this restrains our spending, but a representative government can get gain without pain because it can simply vote itself more money.

Now, someone may rebut that we elect the representatives. So this gives us fiscal control. Right? Wrong! Electing representatives is not only inadequate, it actually has an insidious incentive built into it.

As for being inadequate, the representatives haven't forgotten something that they learned by about the age of two. And what's that? What does every child learn by about the age of two or so? It's easier to get forgiveness than permission! It can be *so hard* to get Mommy's permission! It's so much easier to get her forgiveness! The representatives employ this gem of childhood wisdom when they raise taxes because they know that they'll largely be forgiven by the next election. You can see the lesson: we could take those staid, hallowed halls of the legislature in Olympia, fill them with two-year olds, and no one would know the difference!

To make matters worse, representative government has an insidious incentive built into it, for every representative wants to bring home government money to their constituents because if they don't do it, their constituents are losers! In the federal government, this is exemplified by congressional earmarks.

So what are we going to do about it! You tell me! *We're going to tear up the blank check!*

Let's tear up the blank check!

Now, if you have a blank-check flier, get it ready. And if you don't have one, get anything else that you can tear up. Just don't leave it on the ground; take it with you. Now wait for me. [Get blank-check poster off poster stand.] All right, let's hold them high! The reason that government is fiscally irresponsible is that we've given the government a blank check. So what do we need to do to fix the problem? *We need to tear up the blank check! So let's do it!* [Tear up blank-check poster while crowd tears up blank-check fliers.]

We tear up the blank check, and we replace it with a filled-in check, as shown in the poster. (By the way, the posters are on the website.) The filled-in check establishes a ceiling on government income, with the ceiling expressed as a percentage of the income of the economy. Say, for example, the ceiling limits government income to 10% of the income of the economy. This allows government income to grow as the income of the economy grows.

Now, the people can change the ceiling in response to a request by the legislature or through an initiative process. So listen to this: over time the people can *lower* the ceiling on government income through an initiative process. *This* is the only realistic plan that I have ever heard of for reducing the size of government, and what makes the plan realistic is that a reduction is based on a direct, popular vote for it.

A new balance of power

Now I'd like you to notice that a citizen-controlled ceiling on government income establishes a new concept in political theory. The new concept is a new balance of power. We're familiar with the balance of power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Now there will be a new balance of power: a balance of power between the people and the government in fiscal matters. Under the new balance of power, the people will establish the budget total through their ceiling, while the government will determine spending priorities.

Summary and conclusion

Let's summarize. We tear up the blank check so that the government can no longer vote itself more money. We do this by establishing a citizen-controlled ceiling on government income. This will transform government from an institution that is fiscally irresponsible to an institution that is fiscally responsible. This is what The People's Initiative, I-1071, will do for Washington State.

Our goal is for 100,000 people to each get three signatures. So, when you return to your office or home, please download the petition from the website, send it by email to your local copy store, have them print it. Then sign it, and get just two more signatures. That's all that we're asking any person to do, *but if 100,000 people do this — including every person here —* we'll get the 300,000 signatures that we need to put The People's Initiative on the ballot. Please do it today because we need to get the signatures flooding in ASAP.

One last word: we need all the help we can get, so if you can help, please contact me here or at the website. The website name is *LetsTearUpTheBlankCheck.com*. Thank you!