

Brief for

The Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Please note: this proposed program is intended to enable the poor to vote

\$ Bucks for Ballots

Group calls for incentive program to boost voting by the poor

Making elections more democratic

January 16, 2015 Edmonton

The Group *Poor Vote Turnout* is asking all the political parties to support implementing a voting incentive program.

“Practically speaking The Poor (20% of voters) are disenfranchised because the poor often do not have time to vote. They are too busy just trying to survive,” said, Poor Vote Turnout member Breezy Brian Gregg. “To enfranchise the poor, we are calling for the government to bring in a voting incentive program where every voter is given \$100 cash when they cast their secret ballot. This money can be clawed back at income tax time from those who are not needy and it will allow a poor person to make their own arrangements to vote.”

This should not be confused with vote buying where a voter is paid to vote for a particular candidate.

Studies in the US have shown that this form of voter incentive can really encourage more low-income people to vote and become engaged in the political process.

One study conducted in 2010 in Lancaster, Calif., in northern Los Angeles County, by Fordham University professor Costas Panagopoulos, found nominal incentives like a few bucks don't do much to increase turnout, but a few more dollars is enough of an incentive to convince a larger percentage of people to vote. Source: The Journal of Politics, Vol. 75, No. 1, January 2013, Pp. 266-280

Another study by Victoria Anne Shineman, Assistant Professor, University of Pittsburgh, shows that “ If You Mobilize Them, They Will Become Informed. Experimental Evidence that Information Acquisition is Endogenous to Costs and Incentives to Participate“ <http://ices.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/If-You-Mobilize-Them-They-Will-Become-Informed-Experimental-Evidence-that-Information-Acquisition-is-Endogenous-to-Costs-and-Incentives-to-Participate-by-Shineman.pdf>

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The total cost of such a program seems large but shared per voter per election period it should cost \$25 per voter that is not poor. 4 of these voters' \$25 going to enable a poor voter with \$100. Nearly anyone who would after tax, benefit from this incentive payment would already be receiving some kind of government assistance. The \$100 could be seen as a top up to that assistance. Most people already donate more than \$25 to charity in an election period. Ralph Klein gave out bigger payments than this to Albertans for doing nothing. Why not give money to the needy for doing something that is important?

Summary:

I recommend to the committee that to practically speaking enfranchise the poor, the government should implement a voters' cash incentive program.

thank you

Breezy Brian Gregg