

**Oakland “Democracy Dollars” program**, by its own text and relevant law, should be understood as tied to voter-like political participation rather than merely general resident status — integrated with Oakland Charter context and relevant California Election law background:

### **Argument:**

**“Democracy Dollars” Conceptually and Legally Connotes Voters/Electorate Power, Not Mere Residents**

1. **Oakland Charter / Measure W Framework Measure W (Oakland Fair Elections Act) amended the City’s municipal code and charter to establish a public campaign financing program known as Democracy Dollars that:** • Provides vouchers to eligible Oakland residents which they “may give to participating candidates running for City office.” Although the ordinance uses “residents” as the eligibility class, the program is manifestly a public financing electoral tool intended to empower political participation in elections — not a general social benefit program. Public campaign financing programs are understood in law and practice to be mechanisms that enhance voter engagement and electoral voice.

2. **Ordinary and Legal Meaning of Democracy in Election Law** The term “democracy” in U.S. and California jurisprudence ordinarily denotes government by the people through electoral participation (i.e., voting and political choice). It connotes the electorate — not merely individuals living in a jurisdiction — when used in the context of campaign finance or election programs. Legal interpretations consistently distinguish: • Residents — individuals living in a place, and • Voters/Electors — residents who possess political authority and rights to participate in public elections. Because public campaign financing is inherently tied to election processes, any invocation of “Democracy Dollars” necessarily suggests resources intended to amplify voter influence in electoral contests rather than unspecified resident benefits.

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**3. Oakland’s Program Itself Confirms the Voter Orientation Under the official program description:** • Registered voters automatically receive Democracy Dollars by mail. • Non-registered residents may apply to receive vouchers. The structure demonstrates that the program prioritizes participation through the voter mechanism — registered voters are the default recipients — and non-voters must take affirmative steps to participate. That design reflects an implicit assumption by the Commission and the Charter drafters that the democratic function of the program is voter-centric.

**4. California Public Campaign Financing Law Context Under state law, public campaign financing programs are authorized only for localities with charter authority (e.g., Oakland) and are understood as part of election law frameworks that seek to modernize and democratize participation in elections, subject to:** • Local charter authority to fund campaigns, and • State campaign finance statutes governing contribution limits, disclosure, and public reporting administered by the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC). While California state law does not itself mandate who may receive campaign vouchers, it provides the background that local public campaign financing programs operate within a legal regime oriented to elections and voter influence.

**5. Tailored Filing-Ready Paragraph (Oakland Charter + Election Law) “Under the Oakland Charter and implementing Measure W, the ‘Democracy Dollars’ program is a public campaign financing mechanism designed to enhance electoral participation and candidate financing. Although eligibility language refers broadly to ‘residents,’ the ordinary meaning of ‘democracy’ in election law and the program’s structure — including automatic distribution to registered voters and elective use in candidate races — demonstrates that the program’s substantive purpose is tied to electoral participation. A resident’s mere physical presence in the City does not inherently confer the political authority to influence elections; political voice in democratic governance is conferred through voter engagement.**

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**Therefore, the invocation of ‘Democracy Dollars’ logically and legally connotes voter empowerment and electorate functions, and its implementation should be interpreted in line with principles of California campaign finance and charter city electoral authority rather than as an unfocused benefit to all non-voting residents.”**