

# Van Grack backs public financing

## Rockville mayor issues ideas on election reform

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Rockville Mayor Steven Van Grack, who ran what is believed to be the most expensive campaign in the city's history, is supporting public financing of city campaigns and a \$1,000-contribution limit to candidates.

Van Grack made his proposals Saturday at public hearings before a city task force assigned to study Rockville's election procedures after last year's expensive municipal elections.

Van Grack suggests that candidates be financed by the city through matching funds. Once a candidate raises a certain amount of money, the city would match it.

"It would be easier for people to run for office if they didn't have to go out and raise money," Van Grack said. "It would serve to the advantage (of) those who aren't incumbents."

Van Grack said a cap is needed on the amount individuals and political action committees, or PACs, contribute to a candidate. But he said there should be no limit on the amount candidates can spend on their own campaigns.

Van Grack spent just under \$30,000 on his campaign, according to city records.

The 1985 election was the first time special-interest groups contributed to campaigns turning the contest into a "big money game," said Donald Vandrey, council spokesman.

Candidates and political organiza-



Steven Van Grack  
Supports \$1,000 limit

tions spent \$58,378 in the 1985 election, a big jump from \$14,022 spent by candidates in the 1984 election.

The nine-member task force was appointed by Van Grack and the City Council Jan. 27. It has until August to report to the council. Task force members will study dual registration, financial reporting requirements, contribution laws, fair campaign practices and the maintenance of non-partisan city elections.

The main draw for residents to

speak before the task force is the issue of dual registration. Rockville residents must register twice to vote in a municipal election — once in the county and again in Rockville.

Besides confusing and annoying voters, dual registration discourages many from voting in city elections, some residents and legislators say.

"We should eliminate the dual registration requirement," Van Grack told the task force. He said the city should start a strong voter registration drive to bring more people out on Election Day.

Terry Harris, a Rockville resident, called dual registration "illogical" and a "hindrance to full participation in city elections."

He said if legislators are worried about voter apathy in Rockville, they should abolish dual registration and choose "participation versus hassle."

City resident Randy Slovic called dual registration a "subtle discouragement to participation."

Maintaining non-partisan elections in Rockville also drew criticism from the mayor and voters.

Van Grack said there should be no party influence in the elections, Democratic or Republican, thus making the elections really non-partisan. But if candidates do run on a local party ticket, that association should be made known, Van Grack said.

Fair campaign practices were also

unpleasant moments of his 1985 campaign.

During his campaign for mayor, Van Grack said he was the subject of anti-Semitic remarks and that he and other candidates for office had their signs torn down repeatedly.

He said he does not know what can be done to halt such practices in upcoming elections and left it up to the task force.

Speaking about campaign expenditure reporting, Van Grack said candidates should be required to report their expenses to the city 30 days before and after the election.