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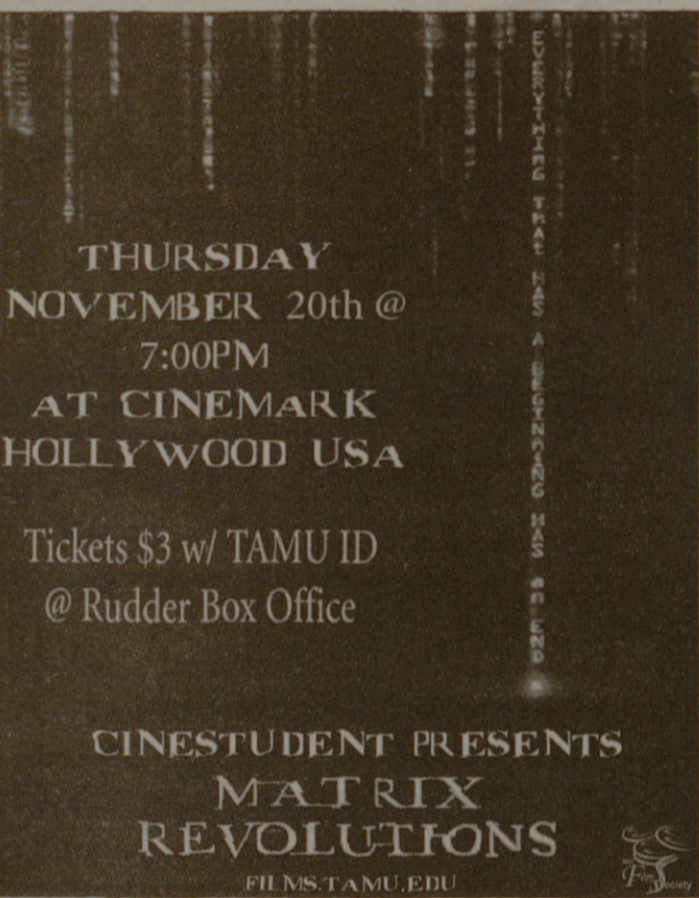
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# Presidential hopefuls' decline public financing, give rivals short-term boost

By Sharon Theimer  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Fund-raising front-runners President Bush, Howard Dean and John Kerry are giving the rest of the presidential candidates a short-term boost in the wallet by skipping taxpayer financing next year.

Because the three are turning away the assistance from taxpayers who check a box on their returns, the eight candidates still participating in the program are expected to get substantially more federal money at the start of the primary season.

The Federal Election Commission initially estimated candidates would only get 40 cents to 50 cents of every dollar they were entitled to when the first checks are sent in January.

But Bush, Dean and Kerry are saving the program millions with their decision, meaning the rest of the candidates could get roughly 75 cents to 80 cents on the dollar, based on an Associated Press analysis of FEC and campaign estimates.

"By opting out of the system, Dean and Kerry and Bush before them have actually helped the candidates who stay in the system by reducing the shortfall," said Larry Noble, a former FEC attorney who heads the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.

Under a program set up after Watergate to reduce the influence of big money in presidential elections, the government matches up to \$250 of every private donation qualified candidates collect for their primary

campaigns. The maximum assistance any candidate can receive is \$18.7 million.

About one in 11 taxpayers checks the box sending \$3 in federal money — it does not cost taxpayers anything from their refunds — to the presidential matching fund. The program frequently runs short on cash.

Candidates typically make up the "matching fund" shortfalls with loans while waiting for the fund to be replenished. That costs the campaign extra in interest payments.

In the 2000 primaries, candidates received about 50 cents of every dollar they were entitled to in January, compared to about 60 cents on the dollar in 1996.

Dean's departure alone had a major impact. The former Vermont governor, who has done particularly well drawing small-dollar donors, would have been entitled to at least \$15 million from the program had he stayed in, the FEC estimates.

Wesley Clark is expected to get one of the biggest initial payments — roughly \$5.5 million if matchable donations continue coming in at the pace they have been. The Clark campaign estimates he will have raised about \$15.5 million by year's end, roughly 44 percent of it matchable.

According to rough estimates from other campaigns, Dick Gephardt will get about \$5 million from the fund in January; Joe Lieberman, around \$4 million; Dennis Kucinich roughly \$3.3 million; and Lyndon LaRouche, up to \$850,000.

Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley Braun are expected to

## When candidates decline, others benefit

When John Kerry and Howard Dean chose not to take public campaign funds, it benefited the rest of the candidates. The Federal Election Commission initially estimated each candidate would get 40 cents to 50 cents for every dollar earned. Now they will get about 75 cents to 80 cents on every dollar.

### Estimated public funds available to candidates

CANDIDATE	FUNDS
Wesley Clark	\$5.5 million
Dick Gephardt	\$5.0 million
Joe Lieberman	\$4.0 million
Dennis Kucinich	\$3.3 million
John Edwards	Up to \$4 million
Lyndon LaRouche	\$850,000
Carol Moseley Braun	\$100,000
Al Sharpton	\$100,000

The system is financed by taxpayers who check this box on their tax returns. It directs \$3 of their paid taxes to the fund. Only one in 11 files do so.

SOURCES: Federal Election Commission; Internal Revenue Service

get a few hundred thousand dollars from the fund initially if they take part, the FEC estimates.

John Edwards' campaign declined to provide an estimate. The FEC projects that based on his fund raising through September, the period covered by the latest campaign finance reports, the North Carolina senator will be eligible for at least \$3.2 million. If Edwards accumulates matchable donations at the same pace this quarter as he has previously, he would get a first payment in the \$4 million range.

Together, it appears the candidates will initially be eligible for roughly \$23 million in matching funds. The FEC estimates the fund will have about \$18.2 million to give out in

January; a February shortfall also expected, as the program waits for tax returns to replenish the fund.

Noble said that while bigger initial payouts are a plus, Democrats taking the public money would probably prefer taking out larger loans to facing primary rivals operating outside the system.

That's because Dean, Kerry and Bush aren't bound by the system's state-by-state spending caps or its overall \$45 million spending limit.

Campaign watchdog groups have urged them to abide by the program's limits anyway, and Kerry plans to do so, and only by the overall limit.

## Teacher suspended for experiment that caused five students to vomit

By Aaron Beard  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SMITHFIELD, N.C. — A high school teacher was suspended for a classroom experiment that caused several students to vomit after drinking large amounts of milk.

Jeff Ferguson, a chemistry and physics teacher at Smithfield-Selma High School, organized the experiment last week to test the body's ability to neutralize acids in milk.

It was intended to show the body can handle only so much before a natural reaction occurs and the person vomits. Out of 42 students in two classes, at least five did just that.

On Wednesday, Ferguson failed to persuade a judge to let him return to the classroom. He wanted a temporary restraining order so that he could return to help his students prepare for end-of-semester exams, but Superior Court Judge Knox Jenkins denied his request.

"It's been rather unpleasant sitting at home and knowing nobody is teaching my class as effectively as I can," Ferguson said after the hearing. "There's not a lot positive about this situation."

The teacher's attorney, Lamar Armstrong, said students were not required to participate in the experiment, and students had receptacles in case they became ill.

"If anybody wanted to quit at any time, they could have," Armstrong said.

Parents alerted school administrators about the incident last Wednesday. Ferguson was sent home the next day and was suspended with pay Tuesday, pending an investigation by a law firm hired by the school district.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Senate fight over polluting gasoline additive may snag energy bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress is one vote away from sending a massive energy bill to the White House, but it could still hit a snag in the Senate over a dispute involving a gasoline additive that has contaminated drinking water in several dozen states.

The energy legislation won solid backing from Republicans as well as a surprising number of Democrats on Tuesday at it whizzed through the House by a 246-180 margin, leaving it up to the Senate to take up the bill later this week.

The measure, covering some 1,100 pages, would provide \$23 billion in tax incentives and other measures to produce more coal, oil, natural gas and nuclear power and double the need for corn-based ethanol, a bonanza for the Farm Belt states.

The boost in ethanol production to 5 billion gallons a year has broad Republican and Democratic support and is viewed as a key to getting the bill passed.

Some Senate Democrats are counting votes to see if they might be able to derail the legislation by a filibuster. They were stripped from the bill a provision that protects makers of MTBE from product liability lawsuits arising from the gasoline additive fouling drinking water.

### Federal officials arrest foreign currency traders

NEW YORK (AP) — Several dozen Wall Street traders suspected of foreign currency exchange crimes have been arrested in a crackdown on a largely unregulated financial market, sources said.

U.S. Attorney James B. Comey was expected on Wednesday to announce the charges against the traders, who were arrested beginning Tuesday.

Citing people familiar with the case, The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that traders at more than a dozen firms were to be charged with conspiring wire fraud, money laundering and securities fraud.

In one alleged case, employees at J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. and UBS AG were accused of arranging deals in which their firms lost money but customers profited.

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