



NEWS FROM ASSEMBLYMEMBER SAM HOYT 144th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Bill Would Require Disclosure of Spending for School Budget Votes *Hoyt-LaValle Legislation Emphasizes Transparency, Accountability*

ALBANY, NY – New legislation sponsored by Assemblymember Sam Hoyt and Senator Kenneth LaValle (A7223/S5071) would amend state election law to require reporting by groups that spend \$1,000 or more to influence public votes on school district budget votes outside of the “Big Five” city school districts. While there are currently disclosure requirements for monies spent on local school board elections, none are required for local school budget votes.

“The public deserves to know who is influencing their vote on school budgets,” Hoyt said. “We need transparency and accountability when it comes to money spent to influence voters’ decisions and I have sponsored this legislation because our communities should know who is trying to sway their vote.”

Under existing law, taxpayers and voters have no way to obtain information about spending by interests attempting to influence the outcome of school district budget proposal votes. Current education law requires school board candidates to report locally to school clerks and to the Commissioner of the Department of Education on their fundraising and spending for local school board races, but this is not required of those campaigning to support or defeat school budget votes.

“This bill promotes transparency, accountability and provides information for citizens about what groups are involved in school budget votes,” LaValle said.

The legislation adds school budget votes to the New York State Election Law provision that requires those interests that are supporting or opposing local ballot proposals to report their activities and spending when they spend \$1,000 or more to influence votes, adding an element of transparency to these critical local elections and preventing anonymous mass mailings like those sent to voters last week prior to the Albany School District budget vote.

“With less state money coming into schools statewide, the districts must now do more with less in their budgets,” Hoyt said. “As the Legislature debates a property tax cap this session, this bill takes on greater importance. Because of these shrinking resources, there is more competition for budget lines. Groups who attempt to lobby for influence in school budget votes should have to disclose who they are and how much they’re spending.”

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and the League of Women Voters of New York State support the legislation. The bill is currently in the Assembly Education Committee and the Senate Elections Committee.

*Assemblymember Sam Hoyt represents the 144th Assembly District.
Senator Kenneth LaValle represents the 1st Senate District*