

CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMON CAUSE/NY
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/N.Y.S.
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN FINANCE
REFORM

New York's campaign contribution limits are sky-high, disclosure requirements are weak, and enforcement is virtually nonexistent. This weak and unmonitored system gives wealthy and special interests a disproportionate influence on elections and state politics. Moreover, the current system makes it extremely difficult for those of modest means or without partisan contacts to run for elective office.

We believe that the state's campaign finance system can be improved through implementing these key solutions:

- 1) **Establish a Voluntary Public Financing System.** It is enormously difficult for citizens of average means to have access to the wealth or the political contacts to run for office. It is important to open up the electoral process to more New Yorkers by reforming the state's campaign finance system to attract a more diverse and competent slate of candidates which will result in more competitive elections. Moreover, instituting a system of public financing will improve the current system by limiting the impact of large donors on individual candidates. It is clear that the many other states in the nation agree with this form of funding elections as voluntary public financing systems have been developed in some form in half of the states.
- 2) **Overhaul the state's existing campaign finance system.** New York State has the highest campaign contribution limits of any state that has limits. New York should dramatically lower its contribution limits, ban soft money, close loopholes, and improve its campaign disclosure requirements.
- 3) **Create an independent campaign finance agency.** Currently, New York's loophole riddled campaign finance system is poorly enforced. New York State should create an adequately funded independent enforcement authority and empower it with greater enforcement powers than the existing lax and poorly-equipped State Board of Elections.

The time is ripe for meaningful campaign finance reform. Unlike previous years, the governor and both legislative leaders support such reform, as expressed in the leaders' quotes on campaign finance below:

"States disclosure requirement are unacceptably lax, individual contribution limits are far too high and loopholes such as treating LLCs like individuals, all expose the obvious need for reform in this critical area.

These problems must be fixed as part of a comprehensive campaign finance reform package to change how campaigns are financed in New York and the influence special interest money has in politics.”

- Letter to civic groups from Senator Malcolm Smith, June 6, 2007

“Existing contribution limits in New York State are some of the highest in the nation and for certain contributors, the highest. Too often, decisions in Albany are shaped by wealthy donors and special interests. We need to change that and restore New Yorkers’ confidence in how Albany does business.”

- News release from Governor Paterson, June 4, 2008

“I and my Assembly Majority colleagues are committed to reducing the influence of special interests.... I remain committed to the principal of public financing...”

- Assembly Speaker Silver, Speech at May 2007, “Reform Day.”

Our organizations urge you to support these comprehensive and timely reforms to New York’s campaign finance law.

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