

**AN OPEN LETTER TO NEW YORK STATE'S LEGISLATIVE LEADERS
URGING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM**

Governor George Pataki
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Senator Joseph Bruno
Majority Leader
909 LOB
Albany, NY 12247

Assm. Sheldon Silver
Speaker
932 LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Senator Martin Connor
Minority Leader
907 LOB
Albany, N.Y. 12247

Assm. John Faso
Minority Leader
933 LOB
Albany, N.Y. 12248

BY HAND January 3, 2000

An Open Letter to Legislative Leaders:

We are writing to urge that you immediately establish a process for commencing debate that will lead to campaign finance reform in New York State before the end of the calendar year. As civic organizations that work on diverse issues, we view the domination of the political process by monied special interests as a huge impediment to real democracy in state lawmaking.

As you know, Governor Pataki recently introduced a bill (Program Bill 92) that would:

- Ban soft money;
- Dramatically lower contribution limits;
- Crack down on sham issue ads;
- Restrict fundraising during the legislative session;
- Enhance disclosure; and
- Toughen enforcement.

These measures would go a long way to improve New York's notoriously weak campaign finance laws. While our groups favor public financing as the best approach to ending the dominance of money in politics - with a national model for such a program in place in New York City - we feel the reforms proposed by the Governor are significant and worthy of examination and action. Further, the Governor's proposals would be desirable and necessary even as a public finance regime was adopted.

There is now a clear bi-partisan view that fixing our campaign finance laws is a priority. In his 1999 State of the State address the Governor called for the Legislature to "clean up the political process with campaign finance reform." He has now introduced legislation. Both Speaker Silver and Senate Minority Leader Connor have advanced significant campaign finance reform legislation - much of which is consistent with the Governor's proposal.

We stand together in demanding serious consideration and deliberation of the laws governing campaign finance. We are ready to work with you to begin a debate that leads to real reform in New York State. We look forward to your prompt response to this request. If you wish to discuss this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Erik Joerss of Common Cause/NY at 212-564-4365 or Blair Horner of NYPIRG at 518-436-0876.

Organizations listed below (list in formation):

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Interfaith Assembly on
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Neal Lewis
Executive Director
Long Island
Neighborhood Network

Mark Dunlea
Executive Director
Hunger Action Network

Ronald Deutsch
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Judy Braiman
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Empire State Consumer
Association

Elizabeth Lubetkin Lipton
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Women's City Club

Alice Siegfried
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Joyce Shepard, CSW
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Sharon Sherman
Executive Director
Greater Syracuse Tenants
Network

Sister Frances Roberta
Sisters of Saint Joseph
Learning Center

Theodore de Soyza
Miriam de Souza

COMPARISON OF IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM INITIATIVES

	Current Election Law¹	Assembly Bill 8524² (Speaker's bill)	Senate Bill 5231-A³ (Sen. Goodman's bill)	Senate Bill 5553⁴ (Governor's bill)
Contribution limits (General election)	Statewide offices \$30,700 State Senate \$7,700 State Assembly \$3,100	Statewide offices \$4,000 State Senate \$1,500 State Assembly \$1,500	Statewide offices \$5,000 State Senate \$4,000 State Assembly \$2,500	Statewide offices \$5,000 State Senate \$2,500 State Assembly \$1,000
Party committee limits	\$76,500 annually	\$7,500 annually.	\$20,000 annually. Also limits political party contributions to candidates: Statewide offices \$100,000 Senate \$50,000 Assembly \$25,000	\$50,000 annually.
Soft money (a.k.a. "housekeeping")	Unlimited. Does not count toward corporate limit.	Banned	Banned	Banned
Public financing	No public financing option	Optional public financing. \$2 public for every \$1 private raised up to \$500 per contribution. Candidates must raise a minimum number of small (\$10) donations to qualify.	Similar to Assembly bill, except allows \$4 public for every \$1 private up to \$500.	None allowed
Expenditure limits for general election	No limits	Governor \$7 million Other statewide \$2.5 million Senate \$150,000 Assembly \$75,000	Governor \$10 million Other statewide \$8 million Senate \$200,000 Assembly \$150,000	No limits
Other changes to contributions	Includes a CPI adjustment for limits.	Doubles the public match when candidates opposes wealthy non-participating opponent and eliminates expenditure cap.	Doubles public match and the expenditure cap, and the bill quadruples the amount a political party can contribute under the same circumstances.	In such circumstances, candidates' contribution limits increase by a factor of five. Eliminates CPI adjustments.

¹ Article 14 of the New York State Election Law

² Introduced by Speaker Silver and passed by the Assembly (93-46, 11 excused).

³ Introduced by Senator Goodman (R-Manhattan). Sen. Goodman has introduced a nearly identical bill S.1028-A, with the only difference being that S.5231-A has a \$4 to \$1 match and S.1028-A has a \$2 to \$1 match.

⁴ The Senate Committee on Rules introduced Governor Pataki's program bill on June 15, 2001. There is no prime sponsor.