

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

February 25, 2011

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Your election focused on a bold plan to reform how New York State does business, and we applaud you for continuing to pursue that critical goal now that you are in office. Achieving real change will require loosening the grip of special interests who for too long have had a stranglehold on New York's notoriously dysfunctional State government. Ethics reforms – including independent ethics watchdog and an independent prosecutor are necessary – but not sufficient. Real change can't happen in Albany until we limit the torrent of special interest money flowing into incumbents' coffers and create a public funding system that will provide a real alternative for candidates from the current status quo of money and politics.

In the State of the State you began the critical road to reform by stating that New York needs public funding of elections. A public funding system with voluntary limits and matching funds similar to New York City's will dramatically reduce candidates' dependence on special interest donors and lobbyists' political contributions. Public funding would also begin to reduce the public's cynicism about elected officials since the public will know that their elected officials are accountable in the first instance to the voters- and not to special interests and donors. With public funding, elections are not just about raising money; but more about ability and policy positions. Public funding of campaigns is the best way to reduce the possibility and the perception of corruption associated with large contributions and unlimited campaign spending. Perhaps most importantly, given how cynical New Yorkers have become about their state government, matching funds encourage voters to get involved in campaigns and reengage in our democratic system.

New York City's experience with public funding of campaigns shows the system works. Candidates of all different backgrounds have successfully run for office, creating a City Council that truly reflects the diversity of New York City. We believe a similar system for New York State would have the same effect, and begin to repair the dysfunction which has plagued Albany.

Your leadership is critical. One year after the *Citizens United* ruling unleashed an era of special interest spending unheralded in size and scope in the history of democracy, public funding of campaigns will define democracy in New York State. If we are going to change the way New York is governed, we have to change the way we conduct elections - and that begins with publically funded campaigns. We strongly urge you to press for these reforms so that Albany can finally begin to work for all New Yorkers, and not just those whose deep pockets have controlled elections in the past. We offer our full support and look forward to working with you to ensure that this much needed reform becomes a reality.

Sincerely,

U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley
State of New Jersey
Allen & Company

U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey
State of Nebraska
The New School University

Richard Aborn
President, CAAS, LLC

Alan Belzer
Fmr. Chief Executive Officer
AlliedSignal, Inc.

Gerald Benjamin
Distinguished Professor of Political Science
SUNY New Paltz

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert
24th Congressional District,
New York

Edgar M. Bronfman, Sr.
Former President and CEO
Seagram's, Ltd.

Sean Coffey
Fmr. Candidate for Democratic Nomination
for New York State Attorney General

Evan A. Davis
Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

Hon. William H. Donaldson
27th Chairman of the SEC

Dr. Hazel N. Dukes
President
NAACP New York State Conference

Eric N. Gioia
Fmr. Member of the New York City Council

Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman
16th Congressional District,
New York

Rep. Amory Houghton
29th Congressional District,
New York

Mayor Edward I. Koch
Bryan Cave LLP

Franz Leichter
Fmr. New York State Senator
30th State Senate District,
New York

Father Joseph A. O'Hare
President Emeritus, Fordham University

Alan Patricof
Managing Partner
Greycroft, LLC

Rabbi Joseph Potasnik
Executive Vice President
New York Board of Rabbis

Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr.
The Brennan Center for Justice

Jonathan Soros
Soros Fund Management, LLC

Bill Thompson
42nd Comptroller of New York City

Frank A. Weil
Chairman, Abacus & Associates