

Liz Krueger



New York State Senate | 26th District

May 2012

Message from Liz...

On May 1st, my Senate Democratic Colleagues and I held a press conference calling for the immediate passage of urgently-needed campaign finance reform legislation. We were joined by dozens of representatives from good government groups and campaign finance activists like Common Cause/NY, Citizen Action, and the Center for Working Families, all supporting S. 3584B. The legislation represents a tested, commonsense approach that would increase accountability and reduce corruption in our elections, as it has already in New York City elections.

Passage of S. 3584B would allow everyday citizens back into the democratic process.

The status quo in state elections is obvious – too many candidates are forced to rely on massive, four- and five-figure checks from lobbyists, special interests, and corporations. This stifles competition, it creates a pay-to-play culture, and it **definitely** influences the legislative process. **In short, it breeds a culture ripe for corruption.**

Campaign finance reform and a system of public matching funds would reduce the influence of special interest money on the legislative process. Enacting this legislation would strike a better balance that will allow challengers and incumbents to compete fairly, while capping the amount of public funds that will be expended and protecting the taxpayers. Key provisions of this legislation would:

- Establish a voluntary public financing system that imposes limits on spending, prioritizes smaller donations, and addresses how campaign funds can be utilized, to ensure that the line between proper and improper use of campaign funds is easily understandable and enforceable.
- Set maximum contribution limits for candidates for State Senate and State Assembly at \$2,000 per election (or a total of \$4,000 for a primary and general election cycle), the current federal level.
- Require campaign committees to identify contributions from registered lobbyists.
- Require the disclosure of the name, address and the amount and source of money raised by any "intermediary" or bundler of campaign contributions.

What's Inside

MESSAGE FROM LIZ	1
COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT	3
- Comment on Proposed Charter Schools in Community School District 2	
- Update on the Marine Transfer Station	
- Update on Second Avenue Subway Air Quality Issues	
- Summer Youth Employment Program	
- Check to See if You Have Unpaid Life Insurance Claims	
- Adelphi Breast Cancer Hotline	
- Information on Filing No-Fault Claims for Pedestrian Accident Injuries	
- VOLS Legal Clinics	
- Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan	
SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY	6
- Facebook and Social Media Privacy	
- The War on Women in New York	

- Create new penalties for knowingly and willfully failing to identify independent expenditures as well as for knowingly taking excess contributions. The new penalty is a fine of up to \$10,000.
- Require candidates participating in the system to participate in at least one debate before the primary and one debate before the general election.
- Create an enforcement unit within the State Board of Elections (SBOE), with a mandate that at least 35 percent of the SBOE's annual budget be dedicated to the unit, to promote increased enforcement of campaign finance laws
- Require that independent expenditures of more than \$1000 which expressly advocate for the success or defeat of a clearly identified candidate or ballot proposal must also be reported.
- Bar individuals from soliciting or receiving of contributions for state or federal a campaign while serving in a senior policy position in the legislative or executive branch.

The good news for campaign finance reform is that this year, there seems to be something of a meeting of the minds on the importance of this issue from many of the major players. Governor Cuomo's State of the State message made public financing a priority, and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver has also introduced campaign finance reform legislation. Even major political donors seem to recognize the problem, and a significant number have joined a broad coalition of groups advocating for public financing.

The bad news is that the Senate Republicans remain intransigent on this issue. Majority Leader Dean Skelos has indicated he is opposed to reform, and rather than encouraging public discussion of the impact of money on our campaign finance system, the Senate Republicans continue to stifle debate. When my colleague Dan Squadron attempted to bring a resolution to the floor calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizens United* decision and oppose full First Amendment protection for campaign spending by corporations, Senate Republicans didn't even have the courage to vote it down. They just bottled it up and refused to debate or vote on it, the same as they have done on countless other bills and resolutions.

Political spending in New York State is out of control. Massive five-figure checks from lobbyists, corporate insiders, and the ultra-wealthy have become the life's blood of politics in Albany, We need Albany focused on the whole economy and all New Yorkers, not just the narrow interests of a few big spenders. Comprehensive campaign finance reform -- with lower donation limits and matching funds to reduce the reliance on big checks -- is the only way to root out the corruption fueled by the free flow of money in politics.

I will be working with my allies on this issue in and out of government to continue to pressure the Senate Republicans to allow a vote on meaningful campaign finance reform legislation.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Comment on Proposed Charter Schools in Community School District 2:

The SUNY Charter School Institute is currently taking public comment on a proposal to co-locate three Success Academy Charter Schools in Community School Districts 2 and 4. I will be submitting comments opposing any co-location of such schools in District 2, as there is neither the space or the demand for charter schools in this district. My staff attended a Department of Education hearing on the proposal, where parents and teachers from District 2 testified overwhelmingly against co-location. In addition, the District 2 Community Education Council recently passed two resolutions expressing concern about these proposals and opposition to the co-locations.

School co-locations can have major impacts on the public schools involved, and the major complaints I hear about our schools have to do with a lack of available space and resources, problems that would only be made worse by allowing Success Academy to take over space in existing schools. My district is fortunate to have excellent public schools, but they are overcrowded – I believe resources should be devoted to those schools in order to ensure their continued excellence, rather than diverted to Charter Schools.

The SUNY Charter School Institute is currently accepting comments on the proposal, which can be submitted before May 21st by email to charters@suny.edu, or by postal mail addressed to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, 41 State St., Suite 700, Albany, NY 12207. I urge all interested or concerned members of the community and make their voices heard.

Update on the East 91st Street Marine Transfer Station:

I was pleased to see that Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, the hero pilot who landed a plane in the Hudson River after a bird strike, has now spoken out publicly about the danger that the East 91st Street Marine Transfer Station would present to air traffic. My office has reached out to Captain Sullenberger's representatives to discuss ways of coordinating our response to the MTS. I have also signed on to legislation (S. 6243A) sponsored by Senator Toby Ann Stavisky that would ban the placement of facilities that attract large numbers of birds near airports.

Update on Second Avenue Subway Air Quality Issues:

While the MTA has funded an air quality study along the construction corridor conducted by the environmental engineering firm Parsons Brinkerhoff, and continues to monitor air quality around excavation sites, many community members have voiced their growing and continued concern regarding particulate matter escaping from the subsurface cavern into the surrounding community. I have written to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to request that monthly air quality monitoring be conducted at the various sites around my district where controlled blasting excavation methods are utilized.

Ideally, I would like to see continuous testing by the DEC conducted at each of the locations connected to the Second Avenue Subway and the East Side Access projects. Furthermore, I now sponsor a piece of legislation (S. 7356) in the Senate, originally introduced by Assemblyman Quart in the Assembly. If passed, this bill will effectively require DEC to monitor air quality within a mile of all mass transit construction projects in

NYC where excavation methods are utilized. I hope my efforts yield some favorable results in the coming weeks, and I hope that you have found this information helpful.

Apply Now for Summer Youth Employment Program:

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has begun accepting applications for its 2012 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). The deadline for submission is Friday May 18, 2012. SYEP provides New York City youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with summer employment and educational opportunities. Participants work in a variety of entry-level jobs at government agencies, hospitals, summer camps, nonprofits, small businesses, law firms, museums, sports enterprises, and retail organizations. The program is built to emphasize real-world labor expectations, increase awareness of services offered by local community-based organizations, provide opportunities for career instruction, financial literacy training, academic improvement, and social growth. Just last year, over 30,000 New York City youth were employed through SYEP.

For more information and for application materials, please visit bit.ly/18MvCR.

Check to See if You Have Unpaid Life Insurance Claims:

The New York State Department of Financial Services recently announced that an investigation into unpaid life insurance benefits found \$262.2 billion in outstanding benefits.

New York customers accounted for 7,525 payments totaling \$95.9 million. The money essentially fell through the cracks if family members were not aware of the life insurance policy or neglected to file a claim. Cuomo's office said that has a result, 32,715 payments across the country were never paid. Meanwhile, the state is setting up a website that allows New Yorkers to find life insurance policies that were lost at nypolicyfinder.com. Search applications are submitted to Financial Services, which in turn electronically notifies the insurance companies.

Adelphi Breast Cancer Hotline:

The Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Program offers information and emotional support in coping with breast cancer. Call the Hotline and Support Program at [800-877-8077](tel:800-877-8077). Callers can get updated information and emotional support from the hotline's specially trained volunteers, most of whom are women who have had breast cancer. The hotline also provides information on accredited mammogram facilities in every area. The hotline, established in 1980, is a project of the Adelphi University School of Social Work on Long Island. All services are free. You can also visit them on the web at www.adelphi.edu/nysbreastcancer.

Information on Filing No-Fault Claims for Accident Injuries:

NYCCarAccident.net is an excellent source of information on the how to get medical bills paid for if you are injured in an auto accident. It describes steps to take in responding to a crash, from what to do at the scene, how to obtain a crash report and file an insurance claim, and more. It also includes information for filing a claim through the Motor Vehicle Accident Indemnity Corporation (MVAIC). Pedestrians and cyclists who are struck by uninsured or hit-and-run drivers, and who lack auto insurance coverage, may apply for coverage from the MVAIC.

VOLS Legal Clinics for people who are Low Income and Over age 60:

The Volunteers of Legal Services (VOLS) Elderly Project provides *pro bono* legal services to low-income people over age 60 who live in Manhattan. VOLS conducts legal clinics each month at senior centers where seniors can discuss their legal concerns in confidence, receive legal advice, and, where appropriate, obtain referrals to a volunteer lawyer for representation. Areas of legal assistance include wills, medical directives, powers of attorney, housing, consumer matters and Medicaid. Over 150 lawyers serve on their Elderly Project volunteer attorney roster.

Upcoming Clinic dates and locations are below:

COMMUNITY LOUNGE, 155 East 22nd Street (between Lexington & 3rd Avenues) — 10 am — second Wednesday of each month (May 9th, June 13th). Call Sanwa Zaki at [212-777-8333](tel:212-777-8333) for information

BURDEN CENTER FOR THE AGING, 1484 First Avenue (between 77th & 78th Streets) — 2 pm — second Friday of each month (May 11th, June 8th). Call [212-879-7400](tel:212-879-7400) for information.

STANLEY ISAACS SENIOR CENTER, 415 East 93rd Street (east of 1st Avenue) — 10 am — third Friday of each month (May 18th, June 15th). Call [212-360-7620](tel:212-360-7620) for information.

ENCORE COMMUNITY SERVICES SENIOR CENTER, St. Malachy's Church - 239 West 49th Street (between Broadway and 8th Ave.) — 10 am — (May 29th, June 25th). Call Sister Margaret Rose at [212-581-2910](tel:212-581-2910), ext 118 for information.

Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan:

101 Avenue D Apartments is now accepting applications for 39 affordable studio and 1 bedroom apartments under construction AT 101 Avenue D on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$461 to \$1818 depending on income and unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$17,760 and \$116,200, depending on income and family size. Preference will be given to Community Board 3 residents for 50 percent of units, mobility-impaired persons for five percent of units, visual- and/or hearing-impaired units for two percent of units, and City of New York municipal employees for five percent of units. Preference for all units will go to New York City residents.

Application may be requested by Email 101avenueD@cmpconsultants.com, or mail a self-addressed envelope to: 101 Avenue D Apartments c/o: CMP Consultants, Inc., PO Box 1180, Valley Stream, NY 11582.

Completed applications must be returned by regular mail only to a post office box that will be listed on the application and must be postmarked by June 19th, 2012. Applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

Facebook and Social Media Privacy

Last month, I introduced legislation to ban employers from requiring their employees divulge login information for personal email accounts, social networks, and other online services (S. 6938). If passed, this legislation would make New York the second state in the country to pass such a law, after Maryland.

Large majorities of Americans rely on personal email accounts, and increasing numbers of Americans are using social networks such as Facebook and Twitter as a part of their daily lives. More than 80 percent of American adults make use of the internet, and more than 9 in 10 internet users rely on email. In addition, more than 60 percent of adult internet users used social networks such as Facebook or Twitter in 2011, up from under 10 percent in 2005, according to the Pew Research Center.

As use of these services has rapidly grown to encompass the majority of adults, many employers have sought access to their employees' social media accounts by requiring that employees provide their personal account passwords. In addition, some employers have sought to screen job applicants by requiring prospective employees disclose their login information and allow employers to inspect their personal, private accounts.

Given the tough economy and unemployment rates holding 8 percent, many employees and job applicants justifiably fear that by not providing their account passwords or login information upon request, they imperil their candidacy in an already-competitive job market.

Ending this pernicious practice will be good for the entire workplace – both employees and their employers. Employees and job applicants shouldn't have to cede their right to privacy as a precondition for employment, and employers that open the door to this are walking into a legal minefield. In keeping employees' login credentials and attempting to review their employees' private, personal communications, businesses are opening themselves up to a whole new world of responsibilities, liabilities, and dangers.

The bill would prevent employers from violating the privacy of their personal online accounts by making it illegal for them to demand an employee's or applicant's personal login credentials or passwords. The bill would not prevent employers from requesting address information for publicly available materials employees may post online.

The War on Women in New York

There is an ongoing, nationwide "war against women," both in Congress and state capitols across the country. In recent months Republican legislators, governors, and even presidential candidates have been speaking and acting against women's rights in what seems like an attempt to turn back the clock on the progress women have made.

Presidential candidates and their surrogates have spoken out in opposition to basic contraception. Republican state legislators have rallied around bizarre, extreme measures further limiting reproductive rights and even punishing women for their exercise of those

rights. Wisconsin's governor just pushed through a repeal of his state's Equal Pay Enforcement Act.

Here in New York, historically a leader on these issues, one would hope we could show the nation a better way forward. Yet we find Albany's Senate Republican majority standing in the way of progress. Against the backdrop of the national Republican war on women, I joined a group of fellow women senators to ask Majority Leader Dean Skelos to break ranks with these national Republican efforts and instead work with us to show a bipartisan way forward for women.

Pay equity, equal economic opportunities for women, reproductive rights, and protection from domestic violence – these should not be polarizing, partisan issues here in New York. But Senate Republicans have buried my New York State Fair Pay Act (S. 2200), bottled up the Reproductive Health Act (S. 2844), and wouldn't even allow a resolution in support of the federal Violence Against Women Act to come to the floor.

Instead of rolling back women's rights and protections, we should return New York to its proud, traditional role as a leader in the fight for women's rights. This is a conversation we need to have all over our state – which is why I recently hosted “Basic Training for the War on Women,” a forum and discussion with activists and experts on the front lines of this fight. We had a standing room-only audience at the CUNY Graduate Center, and heard from a broad panel including Jamia Wilson of the Women's Media Center, Prof. Joe Rollins of the CUNY Graduate Center, activist and author Amy Richards, and Change.org's Shelby Knox.