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**FAIR ELECTIONS ADVOCATES TO NYS LAWMAKERS: DON'T DELAY PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING**

*Advocates rally in Albany urging lawmakers to keep promise and fund New York's small-donor public financing program for the 2024 election cycle.*

**Albany, NY (March 30, 2023)** – Today, the [Fair Elections for New York](#) coalition ramped up its efforts to ensure proper funding for small-donor public financing for the 2024 election cycle, rallying in Albany as lawmakers negotiate the final budget.

“New Yorkers celebrated when Albany committed to reform when it passed the landmark Public Campaign Finance Program, and now we need lawmakers to follow through on that promise to voters,” said **Karen Wharton, Democracy Coalition Coordinator for Citizen Action for New York**. “Our state is closer than ever to ensuring everyday New Yorkers can participate in a stronger democracy and push back against Big Money that has historically shut them out. Gov. Hochul and the legislature must work together to make New York State a nationwide model for fair elections without delay.”

The coalition – joined in support by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, urged Governor Hochul and leaders in both legislative chambers to keep their commitments from the one-house budgets and include funding for the Public Campaign Finance Board in the final budget and ensure that the program is not subject to unnecessary delays ahead of the 2024 election cycle.

“For years, New York struggled to put a program in place to publicly finance campaigns. When an agreement was reached last year, it was a hard-fought victory for advocates and everyday New Yorkers,” **New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli said**. “Our democratic process works best when you take big money out of politics, and everyone has an equal chance to run for office. I opted in because I believe it levels the playing field and promotes fairer, more democratic elections. I look forward to its full implementation as soon as possible.”

Advocates stressed the importance of the program across all facets of New York's political and policy landscape. Crucial legislative fights – including over housing and bail reform – are all affected by the pervasive influence of money in legislative and gubernatorial campaigns.

“New York’s groundbreaking public campaign finance program is up and running,” said **Joanna Zdanys, senior counsel for Elections and Government at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law**. “Candidates have started opting in for the 2024 cycle. New Yorkers of all political stripes support the program. Now is the moment for the state’s political leaders to fulfill the promise they made to New Yorkers when they passed public financing in 2020. Everyday New Yorkers are demanding a stronger voice in a democracy where big money has ruled for too long. Public financing gives them that voice. Governor Hochul and the legislature must ensure that the program is funded in this budget and available for candidates running in 2024. No delays. No excuses.”

The voluntary small-donor public campaign financing program, which lawmakers passed in 2020, allows participating candidates to receive a state-funded match for contributions under \$250. The program officially launched in November 2022, and multiple candidates have already opted into it ahead of the 2024 elections. The Public Campaign Finance Board, the agency created to oversee the program, is fully functional and ready to perform its duty for the 2024 election cycle. Lawmakers must continue to allocate adequate funding to ensure the program’s success and sustainability.

Public campaign financing is broadly popular across the state at a bipartisan level. A recent poll of likely voters found that [62 percent of responding New Yorkers want lawmakers to fund the program in the upcoming budget](#) – including 73 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of Republicans. Public campaign financing already exists in some form in at least 15 states and 21 municipalities across the country.

“Nothing is more important in protecting our democracy than ensuring low-income and communities of color have the ability to run for office,” said **Franchelle C. H. Parker, Executive Director for Open Buffalo**. “I meet with talented, passionate and brilliant grassroots leaders everyday who express a desire to represent their communities in government, but lack the ability to raise large sums of cash. Fully funding and implementing the public financing of elections without delay will ensure we have a truly diverse governing bodies of and for the people.”

“New Yorkers cannot wait another year for public campaign financing to come into effect,” said **Lisa Tyson, Executive Director of the Long Island Progressive Coalition**. “Every delay in the implementation of this program is another year in which everyday voters are drowned out by the monied interests of corporations and the ultra-wealthy. Lawmakers have already passed this program into law, and nothing should stop them from bringing into being on schedule.”

“New York State’s hard-won public matching program is well underway, and it’s something Governor Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Heastie can be rightly proud to have as a legacy,” said **Tom Speaker, Policy Analyst at Reinvent Albany**. “They should stay strong, fully fund public matching for

2024, and take credit for what they've done to expand voting rights and fair elections and keep our democracy healthy."

"New Yorkers have long been frustrated by the deplorable condition of our state's campaign finance system and the outsized power of wealthy interests in Albany. The task now before the legislature is to finish this historic improvement to our broken campaign finance system, a system which has for far too long undermined democracy and sown public distrust in government," added **Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New York State**. "Elected officials should be beholden to their constituents, not their large donors. The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly supports the new Public Campaign Finance Program and calls on the Governor and Legislative leaders to fund the program and not delay its implementation."

"New Yorkers have waited over 20 years for a public campaign finance system, and we can't wait anymore. The Legislature and the Government publicly promised to fund this program and must honor that commitment. The program is in flight, candidates are already signing up, and this program must be available without delay ahead of the 2024 election cycle, as the law demands. We cannot have a 'democracy for me but not for thee' in New York," said **Jessica Wisneski, Co-Executive Director, Citizen Action of NY**.

"We cannot have a people-centered state budget that invests in our communities if our elections are bought and paid for by wealthy donors. New York State's landmark public campaign financing program will uplift the voices of all New Yorkers in our elections, in our budget, and in policy making. We call on Governor Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Heastie to fund New York's public campaign financing program in the State Budget and to not allow any delay to its implementation," said **Danielle Brecker, Co-lead Organizer, Empire State Indivisible**.

"The wealthy and ultra rich in New York think they can buy our state budget to protect their wealth and advance their agenda. Bloomberg's billions and his hefty campaign donations buys him access to the Governor and now she is carrying his agenda. From her push to expand charter schools in New York City to blocking increased taxes on the ultra rich it's clear, pay to play is how Albany operates. It's time for a change. New York's public financing program will amplify the voices of everyday New Yorkers. We need Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to provide the proposed funding for the Public Campaign Finance Board immediately," said **Jasmine Gripper, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education**.

We all deserve to be heard in our democracy. But for too long, billionaires have rigged the system in New York with their big money contributions to politicians.

The result? More hateful and divisive politics in our state, and politicians listening to the wants of billionaires instead of the needs of everyday people. Tenants, workers, immigrant families—we've all got the short end of the stick. That's why we stood up together to pass a historic fair elections bill in New York with a public financing system. So everyone's voice can be heard," said **Perla Silva, Civic Engagement Coordinator, Make the Road New York.**

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### **About Fair Elections for New York**

[Fair Elections for New York](#) is a coalition of 200+ organizations that believe New Yorkers deserve a responsive, accountable government. To tackle the crises we face in housing, living wage jobs, criminal justice, affordable health care, transportation, climate, fair taxes, and more, we must protect and expand our democracy to ensure it is responsive to the majority of people, not just the wealthy and well-connected.