



# THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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## **COUNCIL TO INTRODUCE LANDMARK LEGISLATION TO REFORM & STRENGTHEN NEW YORK CITY'S CAMPAIGN FINANCE SYSTEM**

*Also calls upon Congress to reform federal immigration policy*

**City Hall** – City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Governmental Operations Chair Simcha Felder and members of the City Council will introduce landmark legislation to overhaul New York City's campaign finance system. The Council will also call upon Congress to reform federal immigration policy at today's Stated Council meeting. In addition, the Council will vote on overriding a mayoral veto of whistleblower protection legislation that would protect City employees who report conduct that threatens a child's welfare.

### **CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM**

The Council will introduce groundbreaking legislation to reform and strengthen New York City's public financing system. The bill offers sweeping reforms of who can contribute, extending the corporate contribution ban to cover partnerships, LLCs and other businesses, and capping what individuals with dealings before the City can contribute. It also incentivizes smaller contributions by lowering the public matching fund level to contributions under \$175, currently at \$250, with an increased match of 6 to 1 (with the lowered limit, the new matching funds ratio would still provide the same top public payout of \$1000).

The legislation further encourages candidate participation by establishing firm audit deadlines and standards, creating a due process procedure for board hearings, and clarifying rules around spending. Additionally, there are also provisions to reduce waste in public funds in non-competitive elections.

"Today we are taking a giant step forward to protect our City's democratic process," said **Speaker Quinn**. "With the introduction of today's historic legislation, we are creating a national platinum standard for Campaign Finance reform. By limiting the influence of big business, closing loopholes that allow business entities to contribute despite bans, and further incentivizing smaller contributions, we are giving every day New Yorkers a greater voice in the political process. For their conviction about the critical need to advance this legislation, I'd like to acknowledge Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Governmental Operations Committee Chair Simcha Felder, my colleagues in the Council and our partners in the Campaign Finance Board and good government groups. This collaboration enabled us to make an essential investment in our democracy."

"The Speaker has shown tremendous leadership in putting together reform legislation that makes sense," said Governmental Operations Chair **Simcha Felder**. "This law will bring further transparency to the campaign finance program without erecting ominous barriers to entry to citizens who want to run for office. The Speaker and her staff should be applauded for their work."

Efforts to end the perception of undue influence include capping contribution limits for individuals who do business with the city, such as contract holders and bidders, land use applicants, economic development recipients, and lobbyists, to \$250, \$320 and \$400 for Council, borough-wide and citywide races, respectively. The City would be required to create databases of individuals in the capped categories, which CFB will administer.

The bill also widens the existing ban on corporate donations by eliminating campaign contributions from LLCs, LLPs and other business entities. The legislation offers a clear definition of how privately raised funds can be used and how they cannot, an issue the current law is silent about. To address the ongoing concern of public funds going to non-competitive races, the legislation establishes clear and strong criteria for what qualifies as a competitive race.

This effort will encourage candidate participation in the public finance system and provide clarity in the law by:

- Establishing basic “due process” standards for CFB hearings;
- Imposing audit time limits of 8 months for draft audits and 14 months for final audits for Council and borough-wide races, and 10 months and 16 months for citywide races. In cases of fraud or criminality, the Board would be permitted to extend these deadlines;
- Providing certainty in the advice offered by candidate service liaisons; and
- Establishing candidate personal liability for repayment of misspent public funds when there is no credible documentation and lack of adequate controls to track spending.

#### **IMMIGRATION REFORM RESOLUTION**

The Council will vote on a resolution urging Congress to end federal raids to deport undocumented immigrants. The resolution also advocates for immigration policies that protect the fundamental civil liberties of immigrants and integrates immigrants fully into American society. In New York City, there are an estimated 625,000 undocumented immigrants.

The Council's resolution supports policy changes that would:

- Provide a path to citizenship for immigrants currently in the United States;
- Protect the rights of all workers;
- Support family unification;
- Restore fundamental due process and civil rights; and
- Promote full civic participation and integration of immigrants.

“Since the opening of Ellis Island a century ago, New York City has been a gateway to hope and freedom for generations of immigrants,” said **Speaker Quinn**. “The City’s past achievements and future success rely upon the hard work of immigrants. Misguided immigration policies have a terrible impact on families and communities. I join my colleagues in urging Congress to make real immigration reform a priority and to restore the principles that made America the ‘land of opportunity’ for millions.”

“Federal legislation is the first step in comprehensive immigration reform,” said Immigration Committee Chair **Kendall Stewart**. “I applaud the members of the Senate and the House for putting partisan politics aside and focusing on an issue that affects millions of people across our country.”

“Our Nation’s immigration system is profoundly out of sync with the needs of immigrant families in the US. These families are subject to excessive and repeated injustice,” said Council member **Melissa Mark Viverito**. “The current federal debate over what comprehensive immigration reform looks like is a good start, but still falls far short of reforms needed to protect the fundamental civil liberties of immigrants in the United States.”

“We applaud the City Council for passing this resolution, which sends a strong signal to Congress and President Bush that New York City has a lot riding on their getting immigration reform right. As the Senate nears a vote on an immigration bill, New Yorkers have made it clear that we need a fair and realistic solution that legalizes the undocumented, preserves the unity of immigrant families, and protects the rights of all workers,” said **New York Immigration Coalition Executive Director Chung-Wha Hong**.

#### **WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION**

This legislation expands the City’s whistleblower protection laws to protect City employees who report conduct that negatively affects a child’s welfare. If the veto is overridden, the bill would provide protection for public employees, such as teachers, social workers, and ACS workers, who act in the best interests of children by reporting this type of conduct.

The City’s existing whistleblower law prohibits City employees from taking an adverse personnel action against another City employee who reports misconduct, including corruption, criminal activity, conflict of interest, gross mismanagement or abuse of authority.

“No one should ever have to worry that standing up for the best interests of a child will hurt their career,” said Council member **Eric Gioia**. “Providing whistleblowers with added protection is the right thing to do.”

“People who have the backbone to stand up in the face of wrongdoing should not be punished for reporting misdeeds. Disclosure and transparency are essential to good governance, but when we are talking about circumstances involving our children that is the minimum standard we must meet,” said Education Committee Chair **Robert Jackson**.

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