

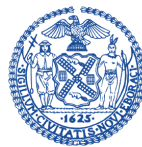
50 WAYS TO LEAVE YOUR BOROUGH



A Campaign Finance Reform Proposal

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

KEITH POWERS



Executive Summary

New York City's campaign finance system has long been held as a model for cities and states throughout the country. The City's system allows candidates to run for office with the assistance of public matching funds and spending caps. The program has been lauded as a success in allowing candidates to run with grassroots support from local donors. One of the understated aspects—but a real linchpin—to the program is the qualifying threshold of campaign contributions from residents of the geographic area that the candidate aims to represent.

Building on this threshold concept, we evaluated the geographic distribution of campaign contributions to see how fundraising was distributed among the five boroughs for citywide elections. Using Campaign Finance Board (CFB) data from the 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2017 elections for Mayor, City Comptroller, and Public Advocate, we analyzed the borough-wide contribution totals for candidates that received public funding.

This report finds a disparity in the amount of contributions that candidates receive from each of the five boroughs. From examining this data, it is clear that the boroughs that consistently contribute the highest amounts of funding are Manhattan and Brooklyn, while the Bronx and Staten Island contribute significantly less. The 2005 and 2009 election cycles may be the most notable examples of this trend—specifically for the City Comptroller and Public Advocate races—yet the 2013 and 2017 elections prove that the trend continues.

The gap in contributions can potentially lead to an imbalance in the attention and time that candidates spend fundraising in certain boroughs. Winning candidates could potentially focus all of their fundraising efforts in Manhattan and Brooklyn, ignoring other areas of the city. All New York City residents deserve equal attention from their political candidates, regardless of the size of their borough's campaign contributions in the past. This report highlights the geographic gap in campaign fundraising and recommends adding a minimum of 50 contributions per borough, in order to ensure more equitable political attention across the boroughs.

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New York City's Campaign Finance System

The City's campaign finance system works to remove the influence of big money in campaigns by: (1) providing public funds to match private dollars raised, (2) applying spending limits to reduce the amount of money spent, (3) limiting contributions to candidates from entities that do business with the City, (3) requiring contributions from local donors, and (4) increasing financial reporting and transparency within campaigns. The CFB, the agency that oversees this system, also assists with voter outreach, supplies data on campaign contributions and spending, and provides insight into changes to campaign finance law. All together, the agency and the laws that guide it have created a system of cleaner, fairer elections that deserve commendation far beyond New York City.

Qualifying Thresholds for City Candidates

In order to be eligible for public matching funds, candidates are currently required to prove that their campaigns have received basic levels of funding through a two-part threshold: a minimum dollar amount, and a minimum number of valid matchable contributions from the area that they seek to represent. These thresholds vary by office, as shown below:

Office	Minimum Contribution Amount	Minimum Number of Contributors (\$10 or more)
Mayor	\$250,000	1,000 City residents
Public Advocate/ Comptroller	\$125,000	500 City residents
Borough President		
Bronx	\$27,702	100 borough residents
Brooklyn	\$50,094	100 borough residents
Manhattan	\$31,717	100 borough residents
Queens	\$44,614	100 borough residents
Staten Island	\$10,000	100 borough residents
City Council	\$5,000	75 district residents

Once a campaign meets these thresholds, the candidate is eligible to receive \$6 in public funds for every matchable dollar raised up to \$175 per New York City contributor, resulting in a possible \$1,050 in matching funds per contributor.

Existing Legislative Efforts to Reform CFB Thresholds

There are a number of existing proposals to build on the existing system in order to strengthen the City's campaign finance laws, such as: lowering the per contributor thresholds for receiving public funds (Intro 774), increasing the matchable portion of contributions (Intro 777), and expanding the amount of public funds that a candidate can receive (Intros 732 and 776). In addition, the 2018 Mayoral Charter Revision Commission is looking into lowering spending limits, lowering contribution limits, and increasing voter turnout.

However, in the conversations surrounding campaign finance reform, there is one area that has yet to be discussed in detail: ensuring geographical parity in campaign contributions for candidates running citywide. This report examines contributions from the most recent citywide elections (2005, 2009, 2013, and 2017) to determine the distribution of contributions per borough for all candidates who used the public matching funds system.

Citywide Campaigns 2005-2017¹

2005 Election Cycle

Position	Candidate	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	Total
Mayor	Candidate A	936	1,138	1,848	1,666	432	6,020
	Candidate B	479	688	3,327	604	51	5,149
	Candidate C	111	1,135	3,934	495	166	5,841
	Candidate D	55	1,581	895	841	118	3,490
City Comptroller	[No candidate used public matching funds]						
Public Advocate	Candidate A	44	215	1,872	130	16	2,277
	Candidate B	34	335	1,303	109	22	1,803
	Candidate C	132	596	1,583	198	154	2,663

Note: Borough contributions of less than 50 are highlighted in red. Contributions of less than 100 are highlighted in yellow.

In the 2005 election, four mayoral candidates received public funding. While these candidates all received many contributions from Manhattan, they received significantly less from Staten Island. For example, Mayoral Candidate B received 3,327 contributions from Manhattan but just 51 contributions from Staten Island. Although no candidate for City Comptroller received public funding, the data from the Public Advocate race is particularly noteworthy. Public Advocate Candidate A received 1,872 contributions from Manhattan, while only receiving 16 contributions from Staten Island and 44 from the Bronx. Similarly, Public Advocate Candidate B received 1,303 contributions from Manhattan, but only 22 from Staten Island and 34 from the Bronx. The geographic disparity in contributions for city-wide candidates is especially stark in the 2005 election cycle.

2009 Election Cycle

Position	Candidate	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	Total
Mayor	Candidate A	654	2,455	2,855	1,447	375	7,786
City Comptroller	Candidate A	58	227	952	904	30	2,171
	Candidate B	57	545	1,187	1,915	108	3,812
	Candidate C	67	409	970	1,062	97	2,605
	Candidate D	65	1,464	2,027	169	21	3,746
Public Advocate	Candidate A	170	2,448	1,420	199	135	4,372
	Candidate B	150	537	2,701	2,198	101	5,687
	Candidate C	73	328	1,310	159	55	1,925
	Candidate D	93	399	1,506	140	45	2,183

Note: Borough contributions of less than 50 are highlighted in red. Contributions of less than 100 are highlighted in yellow.

The same gap is seen in the 2009 elections for City Comptroller and Public Advocate. Out of the ten candidates running for City Comptroller, only four received public funding. From this data, contributions to

¹ Data was compiled using the CFB Citywide Campaign Finance Summaries, publicly available at: https://www.nycfb.info/VSAppls/WebForm_Finance_Summary.aspx?as_election_cycle=2017. Candidates were first filtered by receipt of public funds, and then each candidate's "Monetary Contributions" were broken down by "Contributor Address" to obtain contribution numbers by borough. Data as of August 6, 2018.

the campaigns of two candidates display a clear discrepancy in the geographical distribution of contributions. In City Comptroller Candidate A's campaign, 952 contributions were received from Manhattan, while only 30 were received from Staten Island. Similarly, Candidate D received 2,027 contributions from Manhattan and 1,464 from Brooklyn, while only receiving 21 from Staten Island and 65 from the Bronx. This trend continues in that year's Public Advocate race, where Candidate D earned 1,506 contributions from Manhattan, but only 45 from Staten Island. As in other years, the highest amount of contributions consistently came from Manhattan or Brooklyn, with limited amounts from the Bronx or Staten Island.

2013 Election Cycle

Position	Candidate	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	Total
Mayor	Candidate A	422	4,551	5,136	1,792	330	12,231
	Candidate B	219	951	3,826	926	564	6,486
	Candidate C	277	1,498	1,891	817	217	4,700
	Candidate D	91	952	1,319	713	174	3,249
Comptroller	Candidate A	190	537	3,789	287	114	4,917
Public Advocate	Candidate A	107	2,384	874	426	73	3,864
	Candidate B	190	512	2,590	434	11	3,737
	Candidate C	81	1,661	3,021	166	28	4,957

Note: Borough contributions of less than 50 are highlighted in red. Contributions of less than 100 are highlighted in yellow.

The 2013 elections maintain the trend. While all of the mayoral candidates that received public funding that year received more than 50 contributions from each borough, there still existed a wide gap in contributions. The disparity is even more clear in the race for Public Advocate, with Public Advocate Candidate B receiving 2,590 contributions from Manhattan, but only 11 from Staten Island. A competing candidate, Public Advocate Candidate C, earned 3,021 contributions from Manhattan and 1,661 from Brooklyn, but only received 28 contributions from Staten Island. Thus, the 2013 elections displayed the same gap in contributions.

2017 Election Cycle

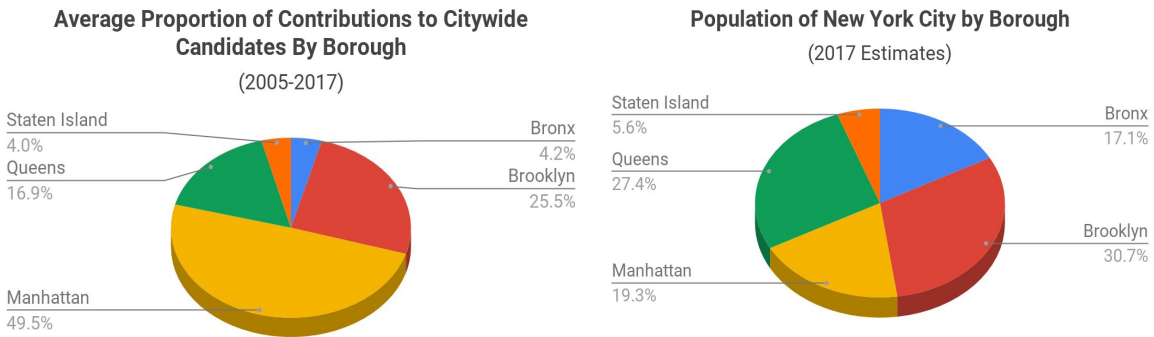
Position	Candidate	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	Total
Mayor	Candidate A	982	5,008	6,799	2,513	626	15,928
	Candidate B	269	1,191	2,142	1,323	1,987	6,912
Comptroller	[No candidate used public matching funds]						
Public Advocate	Candidate A	99	1,046	611	338	60	2,154

Note: Borough contributions of less than 50 are highlighted in red. Contributions of less than 100 are highlighted in yellow.

In 2017, no candidate received less than 50 contributions from a single borough. However, even though the contribution disparity between the boroughs was narrower, it still persisted. For example, Public Advocate Candidate A received 1,046 contributions from Brooklyn but 60 from Staten Island, while Mayoral Candidate A received 6,799 contributions from Manhattan but 982 from the Bronx. Though a 50 contribution minimum for each borough would not have directly impacted this race, it could have made candidates think more broadly about fundraising.

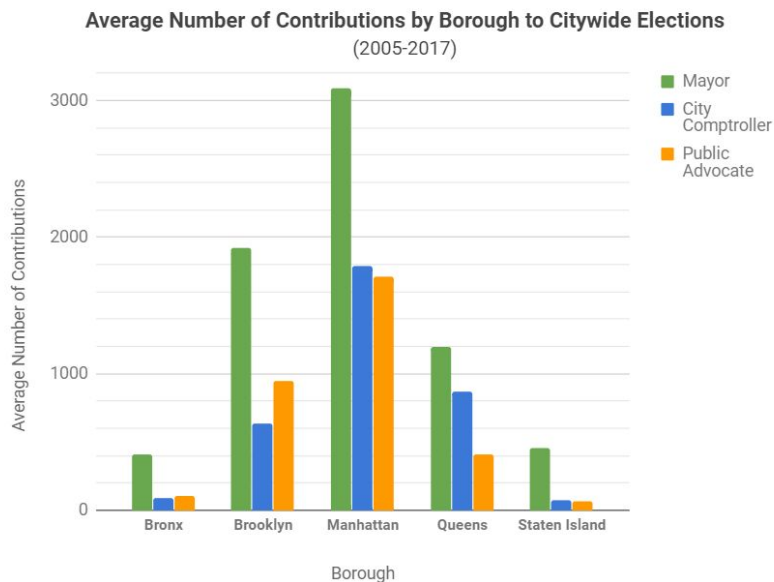
Addressing the Borough Gap in Contributions

As this report demonstrates, there is a wide disparity in contributions to citywide candidates across the five boroughs. This disparity becomes even more apparent when comparing the average proportion of contributions to citywide candidates by borough with the population of New York City by borough.²



As shown in the pie charts above, on average Manhattan provides nearly half the number of contributions to candidates running with public matching funds in citywide elections—while representing under a fifth of the City’s population. And while just over 17% of New York City residents live in the Bronx, the number of contributions from the Bronx represent an average of just 4% of total contributions to citywide candidates.

This issue becomes even clearer when studying the average number of contributions by borough to each campaign type in city-wide elections.



The data indicates that the fundraising gap occurs even between the races for different citywide offices. Over the past four elections, Manhattan provided an average of 3,088 contributions to the mayoral race, while on average, the Bronx gave 409 contributions. For the Public Advocate race, Manhattan produced

² Data was compiled using the United States Census Bureau American FactFinder 2017 Estimate Populations from each borough, publicly available at: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk. Data as of July 1, 2017.

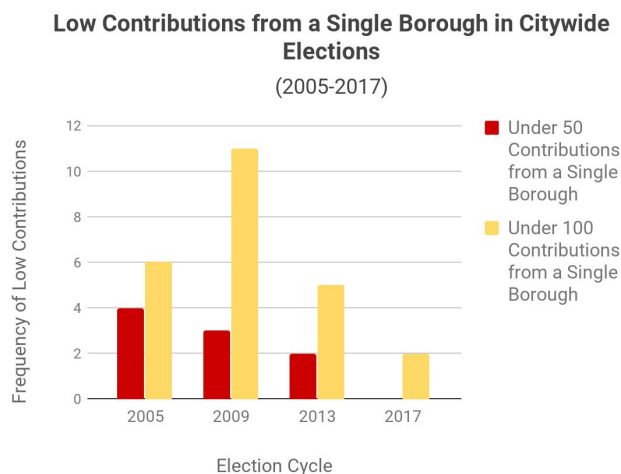
an average of 1,708 contributions, with Staten Island only contributing 64. The past four races for City Comptroller continue to follow this trend, with Manhattan having an average of 1,785 contributions, and Staten Island giving only 74.

The current lack of geographic requirements for campaign fundraising may lead to inequities in the way candidates give their time and attention across the boroughs, as they might simply favor boroughs that tend to contribute more. The Bronx and Staten Island may especially lose out in the current trends. By requiring candidates to raise a minimum number of contributions from each borough in order to be eligible for public matching funds, we can better protect the representation of all New Yorkers and increase participation in campaigns to boroughs outside of Manhattan.

This proves that a requirement of 50 contributions from each borough is an achievable and realistic benchmark and will ensure that each borough is more equally represented in the attention it receives from a candidate, as well as in the funding of individual campaigns.

Legislative Proposal

In order to promote more equal attention to each borough during elections, and to ensure that no single borough overwhelmingly funds the campaign of any candidate, legislation that requires a minimum number of contributions from each borough is needed.



The graph above illustrates two potential targets of legislative action requiring a minimum number of contributions per borough. To create the most equity, a minimum of 100 contributions per borough could be required. However, 50 contributions is a better place to start to ensure a baseline of representation, and the ability of first-time candidates to meet the requirement.

Council Member Powers introduced a bill to set a 50-contribution minimum for each borough for candidates receiving public matching funds, alongside Council Member Joe Borelli and Council Member Fernando Cabrera. By requiring candidates to increase their contribution numbers from outer boroughs, they will spend more time listening to more voices throughout the city.