



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Elections Committee Holds Albany Hearing On Campaign Finance Reform

MALCOLM A. SMITH June 3, 2009

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(Albany, NY)- Wednesday, the Senate Elections Committee, Chaired by Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr. (D-Howard Beach), held a public hearing in Albany to solicit public comment on proposed campaign finance reforms to reinvigorate participatory democracy. Along with last week's hearing in Rochester this concludes the third set in a series of five hearings that will continue in September and November.

The subject of the Senate hearing is a package of campaign finance reform bills and drafts that address both public financing and changing the current campaign finance system i.e. Article 14 of New York's Election Law. In addition to six bills aimed at reforming the current system, the Elections Committee seeks comment on three public financing drafts that offer different versions of systems. The committee's goal is to seek comment by experts and the public as to which proposal they may favor. Witnesses that offered testimony included: Blair Horner, Legislative Director, NYPIRG; Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice; Susan Lerner, Executive Director, Common Cause New York; Jessica Wisneski, Legislative Director, Citizen Action of New York; Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director, League of Women Voters; DeNora Gretechaw, Legislative Director, Citizens Union and

others.

“As somebody who was elected to the New York City Council with public financing prior to serving in the Senate, I know well the virtues of such systems” said Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr., Elections Committee Chair. “I look forward to continuing our dialogue with the public about reforms to our entire system of campaign finance.”

Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith said, “ Our state’s campaign finance laws are the most lax in the nation. In addition to the lack of public financing, contribution limits are the highest, or among the highest in the country, and disclosure and enforcement require strengthening. Our goal is to change that.”

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli said, "New York needs campaign reform at every level, and the best reform is public financing of campaigns. New York has spent too long in the wilderness of virtually unlimited campaign contributions; it’s time for every elected official to step up and publicly support real campaign finance reform."

This dialogue between lawmakers and the public is part of the Senate’s commitment to beginning a robust committee process, developing sound public policy through open dialogue and creating transparency in the legislative process.

The bills package for today’s hearing included the following legislation:

Public Financing of Campaigns

- **Bill Draft:** Clean elections system
- **Bill Draft:** Hybrid matching system with grants

- **Bill Draft:** Matching system with "Triggers"

Campaign Finance (Article 14 of Election Law)

- **S4549A (Squadron):** Lower contribution limits to candidates
- **S5282A (Squadron):** Close the Multiple LLC Contribution Loophole
- **S5565 (Addabbo):** Disclosure of Bundling by "Intermediaries"
- **S4061B (Schneiderman):** Increasing Penalties for Campaign Finance Violations
- **S5546(Addabbo):** Limiting Candidates to One Campaign Committee per Election
- **S5545 (Addabbo):** Disclosure of Occupation, Employer and Business Address of Contributors

Full text of bills are available at <http://www.nysenate.gov/legislation>.

Senator Addabbo said, "I am grateful to be a part of the reform and increased transparency taking place in the New York State Senate. It is my intention to have the Elections Committee hear from as many people throughout the state as possible in order to ensure a fair and equitable process in determining ways to improve the voting process."

Previous hearings in April and early May considered reforms to the registration process, casting a ballot and poll site operations. In future hearings, the Elections Committee will consider Board of Elections oversight, additional election law reforms and oversight of the November elections.