



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Says, “Action Must Be Taken to Reform New York State Elections Process, Provide More Level Playing Field for Candidates”

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR April 15, 2013

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Queens, NY, April 15, 2013 -- Saying that “we need to get to work right now to clean up our elections system and prove once and for all that our democratic constitutional republic is not for sale to the highest bidders,” **New York State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.** (D-Queens) is co-sponsoring two comprehensive bills aimed at reforming New York’s campaign finance system, reducing the power of special interests in elections, and creating a more level playing field for New Yorkers who want to run for public office.

“It’s no secret that the public, in many ways, has lost a great deal of faith in the way our electoral system is run,” said Addabbo. “People often believe that elections can be bought by special interests with deep pockets and that the voice of the public goes unheard and unheeded. With even more reports of alleged political corruption coming to light every day, we need to act expeditiously to make our elections fair, transparent and accessible to good candidates who may not be well-heeled, but who have the qualifications and commitment to be excellent public servants deserving of the public’s trust.”

Addabbo, who served for two years as Chair of the Senate Elections Committee, noted that elected officials all too often find that the time-consuming and seemingly never-ending task of raising money for the next campaign interferes with their ability to do the best possible job for their constituents. “Perhaps most importantly, talented people who would be great candidates for public office often don’t bother to run, fearing that they won’t be able to amass the significant financial resources they need to wage a competitive campaign,” he said.

While chairing the Elections Committee, Addabbo held a number of public hearings on election reform, and believes that New York should place reasonable limits on campaign contributions and expenditures, and take other action to increase the integrity of the state’s overall elections system.

While open to continuing legislative discussions on the best ways to effectively reform New York’s election laws, the campaign finance reform bills Addabbo is currently co-sponsoring are:

-- **The 2013 Campaign Finance Reform Act (S.4009):** This legislation provides for a system of optional, partial, public financing of primary and general election campaigns for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General, State Senate, State Assembly, and constitutional convention delegates. It provides for an income tax check-off to help provide matching funds for campaigns; sets strict contribution and expenditure limits for those participating in public campaign financing; sets strict rules on the use of public campaign funds, and provides a mechanism for recouping unspent public campaign dollars. The legislation also provides for a system of grants to candidates who would otherwise be significantly outspent by well-heeled opponents who decide not to participate in public campaign financing, and are therefore not bound by the same campaign contribution and expenditure limits.

-- **The 2013 Fair Elections Act (S.839):** This legislation also creates a system of optional, partial, public financing for New York's four statewide elected positions, as well as State Senate and Assembly seats. It provides for an income tax check-off to help provide matching funds for campaigns, and would also make use of surcharge monies collected on recoveries for securities fraud in New York. The bill provides for strict campaign contribution and expenditure limits.

"Both of these bills, although they may differ in some of their specifics, have one common aim: to help make elections in New York State more open, more honest, more competitive, and more appealing to New Yorkers who have come to believe, sadly, that their votes don't count," said Addabbo. "I am personally certain that every vote counts right now, even with the flaws in our elections system, but reforming our campaign finance laws will go far in restoring trust in one of our most cherished freedoms -- the ability to choose the best people to represent us in public office."

The bills are now under consideration by the Senate Elections Committee.

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Judy Close, Press Secretary

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

15th Senate District - Satellite Office

66-85 73rd Place

Middle Village, NY 11379

Ph: [718-497-1630](tel:718-497-1630)