



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Stands with Progressive Coalition to Demand Fair Elections

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY April 26, 2013

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS, ETHICS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE**



BUFFALO, N.Y. – Today, a diverse coalition demanded robust campaign finance reform with public financing at its core outside the Erie County Board of Elections. NYS Senator Tim Kennedy, NYS Assemblyman Sean Ryan, Organizing for Action, the Clean Air Coalition, Citizen Action, the Coalition for Economic Justice and several other organizations spoke Thursday morning in favor of passing reform.

"Western New Yorkers are sick and tired of seeing elected officials dragged out of the State Capitol in handcuffs. Enough is enough," said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. "When we finally pass real campaign finance reform, it will be an important step forward in our fight to clean up Albany. This much-needed reform will combat the influence of money in politics and help restore New Yorkers' faith and trust in their government. Fair elections will also spark a vast improvement in New York State's low rates of voter participation, empowering voters to get further involved and make their voices heard in the electoral process. Our state needs a system with reduced donor limits, publicly-financed matching contributions and stronger enforcement from the Board of Elections."

"New York's campaign finance system which rewards big money donors is broken, and that is why the Fair Elections proposal is so important," said **Assemblyman Sean Ryan**. "During this legislative session both sides of the aisle need to come together and say, enough is enough, we need to fix New York's campaign finance laws so that the public has a stronger voice in the system."

"The lack of transparency in both campaign finance and corporate subsidy systems open the door for corporations to engage in pay-to-play schemes with elected decision makers," said **Jennifer Diagostino, Executive Director of the Coalition for Economic Justice**. "Private corporations receive billions of dollars in public funding every year. The public deserves transparency in our election system, and corporations should not be permitted to abuse nonprofits to circumvent it. Publicly financed fair elections will prevent corporations from taking advantage of loopholes in the political process and giving power back to the people."

"For far too long, corporate money has gained power over our state legislators," said **RJ Ortiz, organizer with Citizen Action**. "It is time that we, as voters and taxpayers, flex our collective muscle to level the playing field. With our grassroots movement, we are asking our elected officials to vote yes for a progressive and comprehensive public financing system of

elections."

"We've seen in Tonawanda how long it takes to make change," said **Erin Heaney of the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York**. "Our members are sick and tired of having to compete with the deep pockets of corporate polluters. Public financing will allow our elected officials to raise money from regular people, not polluters that make communities and workers sick."

The campaign for Fair Elections for New York is focused on four key goals, enumerated by Governor Cuomo in his State of the State Address:

1. Public Financing of Elections – establishing a voluntary system to empower small donors by matching their contributions with public money, similar to successful systems in Connecticut and NYC.
2. Lower Contribution Limits – bringing New York State's sky-high contribution limits down to reasonable levels.
3. Ending Pay-to-Play – saving public dollars by preventing contributions and bundling by contractors and lobbyists from influencing decisions about state business.
4. Stronger Enforcement and Transparency – ensuring that our laws are enforced in a fair, effective and timely manner, and that public matching funds are appropriately disbursed.