



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ted O'Brien

Senator O'Brien applauds A.G.'s disclosure rules

TED O'BRIEN June 5, 2013

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ROCHESTER, N.Y. – Today, Senator Ted O'Brien expressed his strong support for Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's new disclosure requirements for shadowy nonprofit organizations that abuse their status to engage in anonymous political campaigning, which took effect yesterday.

Since 2010, these political groups, operating under the cover of 501(c)(4) organization status, have pumped millions of dollars into races at all levels without having to disclose the origin of their funds. In the 2012 campaign, Virginia-based "Common Sense Principles," a mysterious 'nonprofit' group, spent large sums of money in several New York State Senate races, including Senator O'Brien's.

"Promoting transparency and ethical behavior in Albany has been a top priority of mine since the day I took office," Senator O'Brien said. "I appreciate the Attorney General's hard work and focus on this issue. Like him, I am a firm believer in the critical importance of transparency to our political process. These rules will significantly enhance the availability of information about who is influencing the course of elections to the people of New York State. Shedding light on this 'dark money' is the right thing to do."

The Attorney General's new regulations recognize the reality that "issue" ads attacking a candidate in the run-up to an election are simply campaign ads by another name, regardless of whether they explicitly contain an instruction to "vote for" or "vote against" a specific candidate. Organizations issuing such ads and spending more than \$10,000 per year on them would need to publish an itemized list of donors.

"While the ability of individuals and organizations to express their political views is protected by the First Amendment, the public has a right to know who is behind the messages that are filling their mailboxes and flooding the airwaves," Senator O'Brien said. "There is nothing democratic about corporations being able to anonymously spend unlimited funds on attack ads by funneling money through shady front groups. The Attorney General's decision is an important step toward cleaning up the political process and strengthening the people's right to self-government."

The regulations are the product of months of work by the Attorney General's office, including several public hearings held throughout the state. Senator O'Brien was invited to testify at one hearing and share his personal experiences being targeted by dark money expenditures.

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Senator O'Brien represents the 55th district in the Senate, which is made up of the eastern half of Monroe County and the western half of Ontario County, including much of the city of Rochester.

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