



Testimony of

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before the

New York City Council Committee on Standards and Ethics

Hearing on Int 1345-2016, Int 1349-2016, Int 1350-2016, Int 1351-2016, Int 1352-2016, Int 1353-2016, Int 1354-2016, Int 1355-2016, Int 1356-2016, Int 1358-2016, Int 1361-2016, Int 1362-2016 Int 1363-2016, and Int 1364-2016 on Nov. 21, 2016

Good morning. I am Dominic Mauro, Staff Attorney for Reinvent Albany, an advocacy group that advocates for open and accountable New York State government and co-chairs the New York City Transparency Working Group.

Reinvent Albany does not usually testify before Council about campaign finance issues. We are today because the package of bills being proposed add up to a huge step backwards, and would greatly weaken what is considered the best campaign finance system in New York and the United States—and a model we turn to for New York State.

Many of these bills seem like petty retaliation and an expression of irritation by Councilmembers who are annoyed with CFB nitpicking. CFB is imperfect and there are many improvements that could be legislated, but overall, this package is terrible.

Briefly, here is our view on the various bills, beginning with bills that we have the strongest opinion on.

We support the intent of **Int. 1345**, concerning Conflicts of Interest and organizations affiliated with elected officials, however we do not fully understand how it would work and whether it is too narrow to be meaningful.



We strongly oppose **Int. No. 1352**: ending the requirement that campaigns ask if a person or entity is doing business with the city. That is a key disclosure requirement, and its removal places all responsibility for disclosure on the Mayor's Office of Contracts *Doing Business* database. We are familiar with the *Doing Business* database. That database has giant holes in it and cannot be relied on to be the only source of information for whether a person is doing business with the city. A robust disclosure system should rely on both the *Doing Business* database and campaigns.

We strongly oppose **Int. 1349**: Compatibility of campaign finance board disclosure software. Our group has looked closely at CSMART and State BOE software systems. This bill amounts to intrusive micromanagement and harassment of CFB and does not solve the underlying issue with their disclosure software, which is currently being addressed through collaboration with the NYS Board of Elections.

We strongly oppose **Int. 1350**: Adjudication of campaign finance violations. The thirty day cutoff imposes an unrealistic deadline on events that are outside the control of the CFB. Also, according to CFB, the deadline does not give campaigns time to provide a response to their Notice of Alleged Violations (NAV) and would give an advantage to campaigns with the resources to hire a lawyer.

We strongly oppose **Int. 1364**: Executive sessions of the Campaign Finance Board. This bill is a clear intrusion by the City Council into the functioning of the CFB's operation and directly undermines its independence.

We oppose **Int. 1355**, which changes documentation requirements for contributions, as drafted but support its intent and suggest Councilmember Greenfield work with CFB and issue experts.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.