



Reinvent Albany Presents 18 Recommendations to State Public Campaign Financing and Elections Commission

A Strong Program Will Include Effective Enforcement and Incentives for Candidates to Participate in the Voluntary Program

[Government watchdog organization Reinvent Albany presented the State's Public Campaign Financing and Elections Commission with 18 detailed recommendations for establishing a strong public financing system.](#) The Commission is scheduled to meet for the first time this Wednesday and issue binding recommendations on a public financing system by December 1st.

Reinvent Albany's full list of 18 recommendations are at the bottom of this release. Highlighted below are essential recommendations:

Create an Independent Campaign Finance Board Outside of the Board of Elections

To ensure the integrity of the public financing program, it is essential that an effective enforcement and administrative campaign finance agency be established, led by an independent board. The new Campaign Finance Board should be completely separate from the State Board of Elections, and oversee campaign finance administration for all candidates and political committees.

Lower Qualifying Thresholds Candidates for State Offices Must Meet to Receive Public Matching Funds

Candidates voluntarily choose to participate in a public matching program, so the program must be an attractive option. In order to receive public funds, candidates prove community support by reaching thresholds for donations and money raised. These must be set low enough to ensure candidates can reach them. Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget public financing proposal thresholds are too high. Even though Assembly

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districts have 40,000 fewer people than City Council districts, an Assembly candidate must raise twice as much money and 33 percent more contributions to qualify for public financing.

Provide a Public Match for Small Contributions Only (Do Not Match the First Portion of Large Contributions)

Reinvent Albany believes that making taxpayers subsidize large contributions is contrary to the intent of the public financing system. Only small contributions should be matched with public funds. A common misconception of the New York City public financing program is that candidates are given \$6 in taxpayer funds for every \$1 in private contributions for small contributions up to \$175. The truth is the first \$175 of *any* contribution, no matter how large, is matched \$6 to \$1.

Establish Lower Contribution Limits for All Offices and Party Committees, and Impose Doing Business Restrictions

Campaign contribution limits need to be drastically lowered, particularly for businesses and unions doing business with New York State. Campaign contribution limits in New York State are the highest in the country among states that even bother to have campaign contribution limits. Companies and unions doing business with the state can give up to \$70,000 to candidates to candidates for governor. If contribution limits remain so high, fewer candidates will want to opt into a voluntary public financing system with lower contribution limits when they can raise enormous contributions outside the program.

Establish “Sure Winner” Provisions

Candidates should only receive public funds if they have a real opponent. “Sure Winner” provisions limit public funds to candidates who do not have a serious opponent. In order for a candidate to receive a full public fund payment, a candidate’s opponent must receive endorsements from elected officials or member organizations, receive substantial media exposure, or have a family member that has held public office in the same geographic area.

Reinvent Albany’s Full List of Recommendations

Establish Effective Campaign Finance Administration and Enforcement

Recommendation #1: Create an Independent Campaign Finance Board Outside of the Board of Elections

Recommendation #2: Conduct Mandatory Post-Election Audits of All Committees for Statewide Office and High-Spending Legislative Districts; Randomly Audit Remaining Legislative Districts

Recommendation #3: Establish a Penalty Schedule and Only Hold Hearings for Large Fines and Offenses

Recommendation #4: Provide an Enforcement Agency Budget That is a Fixed Percentage of the Division of Budget’s Funding

Recommendation #5: Begin the Public Financing Program in the 2021-2022 Election Cycle

Create a Public Matching Program Maximizing Participation

Recommendation #6: Lower Qualifying Thresholds Candidates for State Offices Must Meet to Receive Public Matching Funds

Recommendation #7: Establish Public Match Caps for the Election Cycle Rather than Per Election

Recommendation #8: Provide a Public Match for Small Contributions Only (Do Not Match the First Portion of Large Contributions)

Recommendation #9: Release Some Public Funds to Candidates At Least Six Months Before an Election

Protect Public Funds

Recommendation #10: Establish Clear and Detailed Expenditure Guidelines

Recommendation #11: Expand Non-Matchable Contributions

Recommendation #12: Establish “Sure Winner” Provisions

Ensure Fairness Between Nonparticipants and Public Financing Participants

<i>Recommendation #13: Establish Lower Contribution Limits for All Offices and Party Committees, and Impose Doing Business Restrictions</i>
<i>Recommendation #14: Limit Party Transfers Except for Small Individual Donations</i>
<i>Recommendation #15: Limit War Chests</i>
<i>Recommendation #16: Ban Corporate Campaign Contributions</i>

Inform the Public About Candidates and Campaigns

<i>Recommendation #17: Require the Campaign Finance Board to Utilize Technology to Optimize Candidate Services and Make Campaign Finance Filings More Transparent</i>
<i>Recommendation #18: Provide More Candidate Information to Voters</i>