

Reinvent Albany: Vote YES on 3 NYC Ballot Questions on Election Day

Ballot Questions Will:

- 1) Strengthen City's Campaign Finance Laws***
- 2) Improve Civic Engagement***
- 3) Establish Term Limits for Community Boards***

Reinvent Albany urges New York City voters to vote YES on all 3 ballot proposals on the back of the ballot on Election Day, November 6th.

The [referenda](#) will strengthen the city's model campaign finance system, create a Civic Engagement Commission to activate New Yorkers, and establish term limits for community boards.

Reinvent Albany believes a YES vote on these ballot measures will collectively amplify the voice of everyday New Yorkers and create new opportunities for injecting fresh perspectives into the public debate over how to make our city better for everyone.

The referenda were put on the ballot by the [2018 Charter Revision Commission convened by the Mayor](#). Reinvent Albany testified before the Commission on six different occasions, [including as an invited expert on campaign finance reform](#).

A separate [2019 Charter Revision Commission](#) was also formed this year, and will put measures on the ballot in 2019.

Reinvent Albany advocates for open, accountable state government, and works on city issues that serve as models for New York State, including the city's campaign finance system, Freedom of Information Law and Open Data. Reinvent Albany is part of the Democracy YES coalition supporting a YES vote on the ballot measures.

About the Ballot Measures

Question #1 (Campaign Finance Reforms):

The proposed reforms will substantially lower contribution limits and enable candidates to access more public funds to run for office. These changes to the campaign finance

system will encourage candidates to raise more funds from small donors and rely less on big contributors during their campaigns. Relying on numerous small local donors rather than fewer big donors helps make candidates more responsive to the communities they serve.

The proposed reforms will specifically:

- reduce the current contribution limits by half for candidates participating in the city's public matching program, and by about a third for non-participating candidates. Contribution limits for citywide offices, will be reduced from \$5,100 to \$2,000 for participants in the public matching program, and to \$3,500 for non-participants; limits for City Council will be reduced from \$2,750 to \$1,000 for participants and \$1,500 for non-participants. [Reinvent Albany was invited to testify by the Commission as experts on campaign finance, and recommended reducing the campaign contributions by half.](#)
- increase the public match rate from the current \$6 in public funds for every \$1 of the first \$175 of a contribution to \$8 in public funds for every \$1 of the first \$175 for candidates running for borough president and City Council. For mayor, the \$8:\$1 match will be on the first \$250 of any contribution.
- enable candidates to raise 75 percent of their campaign funds from the public match. [Reinvent Albany campaigned for lifting the public match cap, which currently limits candidates to receiving 55 percent of their campaign funds from public monies provided by the public matching system.](#) We joined with Represent.us NY and Councilmember Ben Kallos to advocate for increasing the public match cap by testifying at six of the Commission's public hearings. Our advocacy before the Commission followed a campaign in the City Council, in which we made hundreds of calls and emails to get a majority of Councilmembers to co-sponsor [legislation](#) lifting the cap. Reinvent Albany and Represent.us NY issued a [report](#) showing most Councilmembers raise most of their campaign cash from larger contributions.
- release public funds to candidates earlier in the campaign season, which [Reinvent Albany recommended in testimony to the Commission.](#)

Question #2 (Civic Engagement Commission)

Question 2 establishes a Civic Engagement Commission to promote civic activism and participation in our democracy. New York City has experienced dwindling voter participation in the twenty-first century, and the Civic Engagement Commission provides a mechanism to mobilize New Yorkers to engage with their government.

The proposed reforms will specifically:

- establish a 15-member Civic Engagement Commission with 8 appointees selected by the mayor, and the remainder appointed by the City Council Speaker and each borough president.
- require the Commission administer a citywide participatory budget program in which New Yorkers vote on projects to be considered for funding in the city's budget.
- develop language access programs including a poll worker translation program.
- engage with community groups, institutions and city agencies to identify and develop initiatives and opportunities to foster civic participation.

Question #3 (Community Boards)

Question 3 establishes term limits for community boards, and standardizes the process for applying to be a community board member. These proposals will diversify community boards to better reflect the neighborhoods they represent and give more community members the opportunity to serve.

The proposed reforms will specifically:

- establish a limit of four consecutive two-year terms for community boards beginning in April 2019, with exceptions for board members appointed or reappointed on April 1, 2020, who can serve five consecutive two-year terms so not all members depart the boards simultaneously.
- require borough presidents to put standardized applications online so New Yorkers can apply to become community board members.
- require community board applicants disclose potential conflicts of interest and affirm they will follow city ethics laws.
- mandate borough presidents report on their procedures for filling board positions.
- enable community boards to receive technical support on land use from the Civic Engagement Commission, if created by ballot proposal #2.