

Dear Candidate,

Last summer, after scores of arrests of public officials, Governor Cuomo appointed a Moreland Commission of the State's top prosecutors and civic leaders to investigate corruption in government. In recent weeks, the work of that commission is back in the news, with conflicting reports about whether its work was improperly cut short or limited.

It is not surprising that these reports have attracted substantial public attention. But lost in the controversy is the fact that even before its work was halted, the commission made remarkable progress in uncovering the sources of corruption in New York, and provided solutions for restoring integrity and the voices of average New Yorkers in government.

The Commission's December 2013 report and recommendations for reform was scathing: "New York's campaign finance laws and practices enable special interests and wealthy individuals to flood the political process with enormous amounts of money," corrupting the process to the point that average New Yorkers have almost no sway over policy decisions. Its top recommendations for addressing this problem were equally clear: the state needs to adopt comprehensive campaign finance reform.

The Moreland Commission's work has ceased, and the legislature failed to act last year on this critical recommendation. But that does not mean that the issues have gone away, or that its recommendation cannot be adopted by the legislature next year.

We ask you, as a candidate for the state legislature, to embrace Moreland's recommendation. In particular, we ask that, if elected, you actively work to bring to the floor and vote to enact the central elements of comprehensive campaign finance reform:

- **Matching funds for small donations.** A voluntary program for candidates that matches small donations from natural persons residing in New York State with public funds will encourage small donors to contribute and participate in the electoral process. To address that goal, the system must be properly calibrated to encourage participation by candidates, as well as encourage greater participation by small donors.
- **Independent and robust enforcement and regulation.** New York State's enforcement of campaign finance laws is notoriously lax, leading to corruption and abuses of the system. We need a new, truly independent oversight and enforcement body with strong effective responsibility for all campaign finance law administration, including public financing and sufficient funds to perform its mission well.

- **Reasonable contribution limits.** New York State’s loopholes and exorbitant contribution limits encourage politicians and parties to seek huge sums from their contributors. We need to set reasonable limits on contributions to all candidates and parties that will allow citizens to show their political support without being extorted for unlimited donations.

By overwhelming numbers, New Yorkers of all political persuasions desire a campaign finance system that increases transparency and brings more fairness to the political process by giving everyday citizens more say and influence. You have the opportunity to make that happen by pressing for these reforms. We urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

Fritz A.O. Schwartz, Jr., Chief Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice
 Gerald Benjamin, Director, SUNY New Paltz Center for Research (CRREO)
 Hazel Dukes, President, NAACP New York State Conference
 Cynthia Di Bartolo, Chair, Greater New York Chamber of Commerce
 Dick Dadey, Executive Director, Citizens Union
 Susan Lerner, Executive Director, Common Cause New York
 John R. Dunne, former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. Of Justice
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