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Fair Elections for New York Campaign Commends Assembly Majority for Introducing Fair Elections Act

Proposal Includes Public Funding at Core of Reform

Albany, NY – The Fair Elections for New York campaign today commended Speaker Sheldon Silver and the Assembly Majority after they unveiled an amended 2013 Fair Elections Act (A.4890-A), a comprehensive campaign finance reform package that includes public financing at its core. With today's announcement, the Assembly Majority has reaffirmed its long-term commitment to comprehensive reform and the public financing of elections. Governor Andrew Cuomo, the Senate Democratic Conference and the Independent Democratic Conference have also publicly supported taking action on this issue during the current legislative session.

"Citizen Action of New York applauds the Speaker for his consistent and unwavering leadership in the effort to reduce the influence of big campaign checks and restore the public's trust in government," said **Karen Scharff, executive director of Citizen Action of New York**. "The Speaker and the Assembly are showing everyday New Yorkers that their voices will be heard, instead of being drowned out by big money campaign contributors."

"The scandals that have rocked Albany have laid bare a culture of corruption where money equals power," said **Dan Cantor, executive director of the Working Families Party**. "This is not how our democracy should work. Publicly financed Fair Elections can restore trust in government and ensure that elected officials will answer to voters and not just dollars. I'm proud to thank Speaker Silver for being Albany's leading voice for ending the corruption influence of money in politics."

"New York's campaign finance system must be reformed. It is not working," said **Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU)**. "Big money is drowning out the voices of everyday New Yorkers, and distorting our democracy. We need lower contribution limits, corporate loopholes closed, a public financing option and fair enforcement of the law."

"Tenants are hopeful that Speaker Silver's Fair Elections Act, built around a core of public financing of elections, will restore New Yorkers' faith in their state government, and **appreciate the Speaker for introducing this bill,"** said **Jaron Benjamin, executive director of the Met Council on Housing**. "We will continue to work with the Assembly to take the next step, closing the limited liability corporation loophole that allows landlords and others with multiple LLCs to far exceed the legal contribution limit by spreading contributions over multiple legal entities."

"We thank Speaker Silver for introducing this bill and striving to return New York's elections to everyday voters," said **Bruce Both, president of United Food and Commercial Workers**. "After publicly financed elections become law, we know that New York's public policy will better reflect the will of the people and not big corporations."

Dick Dadey, executive director of Citizens Union said, "With the introduction of an important campaign finance reform bill, Citizens Union is pleased to see Speaker Silver and the Assembly continue its long history of leadership of an issue that reduces the influence of campaign contributions on our political process. For any public campaign financing program to succeed, it needs to be accompanied with strong enforcement, so we are particularly pleased to see the Speaker's bill include an rigorous oversight entity that will give New York taxpayers confidence that state dollars are being well spent in making our elections more fair, open to more candidates, and competitive."

"The Sierra Club applauds the Assembly's efforts to restore the voices of everyday people through meaningful campaign finance reform," said **Roger Downs, conservation director for the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter**. "If we cannot control the toxic money that corrupts New York State politics then we are virtually powerless to reign in the toxic chemicals that harm our environment. The connection between big money and failed public policy is that simple."

"The New York Legislature has a unique opportunity to put democracy back in the hands of the people by delivering on public financing of elections," said **Dr. Hazel Dukes, President NAACP New York State Conference**. "The People of New York are ready for this, but it can not happen without leadership and guts. We are committed to organizing and mobilizing our members across the state from Buffalo to Freeport from Mid-Manhattan to Rochester. We are ready for this."

"Speaker Silver deserves credit for his leadership in offering the right fix to put government back in the hands of the people with the Fair Elections Act of 2013," **Hector Figueroa, President of 32BJ SEIU**. "The scandals of the past few weeks are sadly all too familiar for New Yorkers. The "show me the money" culture has damaged public faith in government and in our elected leaders. It's long past time to end the corrupting influence of money in Albany, and make sure the voices of ordinary people are heard. It's time for public financing of elections."

"Let us seize this time to pass a well-crafted, sound Fair Elections bill that will boot big money interests out and bring everyday New Yorkers into our campaigns," said **Betty Head, MoveOn.Org council organizer of the Capital Region of New York**. "Passage of this bill will go a long way to create a level playing field."

"Speaker Silver and the Assembly Majority are taking a big step to limit the power of big-money corporate interests and put everyday New Yorkers back in the driver's seat," said **Michael Kink, executive director of the Strong Economy For All Coalition**. "And that will bring real policy changes: fewer tax loopholes and subsidy giveaways to big business, more investments in jobs, education and fighting poverty, more attention to reducing income inequality and rebuilding the middle class."

"The recent arrests in the last few weeks have awakened calls to combat corruption in Albany. Fortunately, thanks to Speaker Silver's long time support for campaign finance reform, we have an expanded and improved proposal which can begin to remedy the problem of money in politics. Most importantly, the Speaker's bill provides both a mechanism and the budget to establish real enforcement in the Board of Elections which is so sorely lacking. Momentum is building throughout New York State and it's the responsibility of all legislators to step up and answer the people's call. Common Cause/NY is committed to working with Speaker Silver to help make comprehensive campaign finance reform a reality," said **Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY**.

"With this bill, Speaker Silver is showing strong leadership in moving New York toward a more healthy democracy and a campaign finance system that works for ordinary people," said **Joan Dando, executive director of Democracy Matters**. "Along with the support of Governor Cuomo and Democratic leaders in the State Senate, we know that publicly financed elections will be passed this legislative session."

"Big money has always greased the wheels for special treatment in Albany. Who can be surprised when it crosses the line into bribery? It's got to stop," said **Bob Master, Legislative and Political Director, CWA District 1**. "Public financing of elections will help take our democracy back and make sure every voice is heard. We're proud to stand with Speaker Silver who has been leading the way on this issue for years in support of the Fair Elections Act of 2013."

"We have to ensure that corporate spending and other special interest money don't drown out the voices of ordinary New Yorkers," said **UFT President Michael Mulgrew**. "This bill will help make sure the 99 percent are heard in New York State elections."

"Speaker Silver has been a longstanding champion of small donor public financing as a way to increase the influence of average New Yorkers and counter the power of large donors and special interests in our current system," said **Lawrence Norden, deputy director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice**. "The thoughtful bill announced today strengthens previous proposals by ensuring stronger enforcement of campaign laws and greater transparency for independent expenditures. It should help ensure that voters, not dollars, control our government."

"By passing a system that emphasizes the voice of small donors in our elections, Speaker Silver and the legislature would serve as national leaders in efforts to restore our government to one that is truly of, by, and for the people," said **Nick Nyhart, president and CEO of Public Campaign**.

"The Assembly bill to publicly fund state elections takes us one step closer to restoring New Yorkers' trust in government. Events of recent weeks show just how much we need it. We congratulate Speaker Silver for his consistent leadership on this issue over the years," said **Dave Palmer, executive director of the Center for Working Families**.

"Publicly financed elections and spending limits are vital if we are to level the playing field and take the corrosive influence of money out of our electoral process," said **Scott M. Sommer, UAW Region 9A New York Area sub-regional director**. "Speaker Silver's legislation meets those goals, restoring faith in government and integrity in the electoral process."

"We're proud to see Speaker Silver move New York one step closer to publicly financed elections," said **Rob Werner, national field director for Americans for Campaign Reform**. "We applaud his consistent support for comprehensive campaign finance reform, and know that his fellow lawmakers will do the right thing by creating a small donor matching system for statewide campaigns."

"Since small businesses cannot afford to pay lobbyists, the only way we can have our voices heard is through fair and publicly financed elections," said **Freddy Castiblanco, owner of Terraza 7 Cafe in Queens**. "Too often, big corporations have supplanted our representation on critical issues for our economy, drowning out the voices of the real economic engines: the small businesses and the everyday consumers and workers."

For more information about the Fair Elections campaign, please visit www.fairelectionsny.org

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Ordinary New Yorkers should have their voices heard. We should replace corporate-funded elections with Fair Elections. We need to put elections back in the hands of ordinary New Yorkers. Politicians should work for us, not their special interest sponsors.

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