

NYC Campaign Finance Board Post-Election Hearings

December 12, 2005

By: Gur Tsabar, 2005 candidate for Manhattan's 2nd Council District

Good afternoon.

I am Gur Tsabar, and I ran for City Council in Manhattan's 2nd Council District in the September Primaries.

Before I begin, I would first like to commend the CFB. You did your job, and for the most part, you did it well. I would also like to take this opportunity to praise the work of Tara Smith, my campaign liaison. She took seriously her responsibility of preserving the public's trust – and I can only hope that my campaign's handling of public funds proved that we did as well.

I don't plan on waxing poetic today. I'm sure many already have – and certainly, that others will. So please allow me to just cut to the chase.

Yes, there's room for improvement ... on which I've commented in my questionnaire ... but in all honesty, much of it is beyond your control. We have a campaign financing system that astoundingly, with the exception of a single piece of paper certifying our candidacies, is completely disconnected to the Board of Elections – and the programs it administers.

The problem with this is that no matter how you attempt to level the playing field – which is a whole other discussion – you will fail. As long as the Board of Elections administers faulty, rather undemocratic programs, like allowing campaigns to litigate other campaigns' petitions, there's seemingly not much you can do.

But I'm here to suggest otherwise. I'm here to suggest that at least in the short-term, instead of just requiring that the Board of Elections provide you a piece of paper stating that candidates have qualified for the ballot, have the Board of Elections add another paragraph to the letter. Have the Board of Elections explain to you the details of any litigation in which the candidate was involved – and for the time being, use that to raise a red flag.

Wouldn't it be good, for starters, to know that candidates already used public funds to ethnically cleanse a ballot, to prevent qualified petitioners from their chance to participate in our democracy? Where's the level playing field in that?

As we all know, what's legal is not always right. If candidates sanction such actions, I can think of no respectable reason why the CFB would or should allow these candidates access to the public trough. At the point you've granted access, your system to "level the playing field" has failed.

Simply put, a level playing field is not just a function of the CFB.

In short order, I will be calling on our elected officials at the City and State levels to push through a real, comprehensive, holistic reform package, so that the left hand of the electoral process can actually know what the right hand is doing. Otherwise, all of us are just spinning our wheels.