



# **New York City Campaign Finance Board**

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**Testimony of Amy Loprest  
Executive Director  
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**City Council Committee on Governmental Operations  
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Good morning, Chairman Sears and Committee members. I am Amy Loprest, Executive Director of the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). With me are Deputy Executive Director Shauna Tarshis Denkensohn and General Counsel Sue Ellen Dodell.

## **FY2010 Budget**

Pursuant to the New York City Charter, Section 1052(c), the Board submitted its estimated budget for fiscal year 2010 to the Mayor on March 10. The Charter requires that the Mayor include the Board's estimate in his Executive Budget. The budget request is attached to this testimony.

The Board's budget for fiscal year 2010 is consistent with previous citywide election years. The allocation for the campaign finance fund to provide matching payments to candidates is dramatically increased in a citywide election year. As in previous years, unused portions of the campaign finance fund will be returned to the City's General Fund after the elections are concluded.

The Board's request also includes funds for the citywide Voter Guide. For each regularly scheduled election, the Voter Guide is printed and mailed to all registered voters before the primary and general elections.

As a result, the Board's budget request for the coming year contains a significant increase beyond the current year's budget. Still, it is important to note that this request represents a decrease from the CFB's budget for the 2005 election year. Where we are able to contain costs, we are doing so. Outside of the matching funds and the Voter Guide, our costs will decrease over the next fiscal year. Changes required to meet the new mandates from the 2007 legislation are reflected in the budget from FY2009.

### **2009 Elections**

The Board is busy with its preparations for the 2009 elections. As of today, there are 216 active candidates registered with the Board. We expect that more candidates will file their initial registration with the board in advance of the next disclosure filing, which is due to the Board by the close of business next Monday, March 16.

**Enhanced Training:** The Board's enhanced training program helps those candidates better fulfill their responsibilities under the law. The 2007 amendments to the Campaign Finance Act require attendance for all participating campaigns at CFB compliance and software training seminars. To date, the CFB's Candidate Services Unit (CSU) has certified 151 campaigns as having completed the two-part training course. CSU will continue to hold regularly scheduled training sessions for campaigns, and will increase their frequency as the election grows nearer.

**Debate Program:** Since the 1997 election, the Board has administered mandatory debates among participating candidates for Mayor, Public Advocate, and Comptroller. The law specifies two debates before the primary and two before the general election, with an additional debate in the case of a run-off election. We have solicited and

received applications from organizations interested in sponsoring debates during the 2009 elections. The names of these organizations are posted on our website, [www.nycfb.info](http://www.nycfb.info), and the process of interviewing and selecting sponsors is underway.

**Doing Business:** As amended by Local Law 34 of 2007, the Campaign Finance Act places low limits on contributions from those doing business with city government, giving New York City the most comprehensive limits on “pay-to-play” of any jurisdiction in the country.

Since we last testified before this Committee, the Board has certified Phases 2 and 3 of the Doing Business Database, meeting the deadlines established by the law. Each phase was implemented, as the law required, within 30 days after the Board’s certification.

To date, we have performed “doing business” reviews for three council elections and two disclosure statements for the 2009 citywide elections. For each, we have met the deadlines set by the law to notify campaigns if contributions have exceeded the doing business limits.

**Other recent innovations:** Several new initiatives are improving the efficiency of the Board’s operations and increasing the flow of information between the Board and campaigns for City office. Earlier this year, the Board introduced a web-based gateway called C-Access, which offers campaigns an instant and secure link to an array of useful information and services online. Between now and the fall, we are planning to introduce several new features that should make C-Access an even more valuable resource for campaigns.

In advance of the fall elections, we have also implemented an Electronic Content Management (ECM) system to streamline our operations by improving communications between units and reducing the agency’s reliance on paper files.

**Searchable Campaign Finance Database:** All financial information reported by campaigns to the CFB is made public through our online database, providing a high level of transparency to New York City's electoral process. Within the coming months, we expect to introduce an update to our searchable database. The update will offer new search capabilities and an improved, user-friendly interface.

### **Conclusion**

As always, the CFB looks forward to continuing to work with the Council to make the Program more effective and efficient. Thank you for your time, and we look forward to answering any questions you may have.