



# **New York City Campaign Finance Board**

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## **Testimony of Amy Loprest Executive Director New York City Campaign Finance Board**

### **City Council Committee on Governmental Operations March 15, 2010**

Good morning to the Chair, Council Member Gail Brewer, and the 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.

First and foremost, we would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today. We would like to congratulate the new chair, Council Member Brewer, and thank her for her testimony at our post-election hearings, as well as Council Member Inez Dickens, for the testimony she submitted. As you know, the Board is mandated by law to evaluate the success of the Campaign Finance Program after each election. We appreciate your participation in our review process, and look forward to working with you to further improve the Program for the candidates and the public we serve.

#### **2009 Post-Election Survey and Report**

As part of our effort to collect feedback on the Program, in December 2009, CFB invited candidates, treasurers, and campaign liaisons from the 2009 elections to participate in an online survey. Ninety-four responses were received by the closing date of the survey, February 1, 2010. Many of the results were encouraging.

A few key findings: 78 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that, “The Campaign Finance Board is fair.” Over 95 percent of respondents agreed that CFB staff members are professional, courteous and knowledgeable.

We did learn that we have a few areas where we can do better. Based on the feedback we received from campaigns, we are working to improve both the consistency and clarity of our written materials. The CFB appreciates hearing from candidates and campaign staff and will incorporate their feedback into our plans for the next election cycle.

Our review of the Campaign Finance Program for the 2009 election will culminate with our Post-Election Report, which will be submitted to the mayor and the City Council by September 1, 2010. Our staff is already hard at work preparing the report, which will include our post-election analysis of the Program, as well as the mandated review of the impact of the “Doing Business” legislation. As the law requires, the report will also include a list of legislative recommendations for improvements to the Campaign Finance Act.

### **2009 Elections**

With our analysis underway, we are happy to report some of our initial observations. We are very encouraged that participation in the Program for the 2009 election increased considerably from the previous citywide election in 2005. Of the 231 candidates on the ballot for city office in 2009, 84 percent (195 candidates) were Program participants. This is a significant increase from the 2005 election cycle, where participation was 73 percent.

The CFB distributed \$27,304,733 in public funds to candidates during the 2009 elections. Candidates in the primary elections received \$20,379,579; another \$1,401,636 was

distributed in the runoff elections for public advocate and comptroller, and \$5,523,518 was distributed for the general elections.

As is the case after every election, unused funds are returned to the city fund. The CFB has already returned \$20 million to the city's General Fund from the 2009 Election Cycle.

The CFB also published the citywide Voter Guide for the 2009 Election Cycle. To reduce mailing costs for the General Election Voter Guide, we mailed the required Chinese and/or Korean Guide together with the English edition for households who receive both, resulting in substantial savings on postage. To increase outreach to limited English proficiency (LEP) voters, we created pages for the Voter Guide on our website in Spanish, Chinese and Korean, and posted translated editions of the Guide along with links to other translated content there. We are researching ways we can better identify LEP households to ensure these resources are properly targeted to the voters who need them.

### **Upcoming Elections**

The CFB is also working with candidates in the March 23 special election in the 44<sup>th</sup> Council District. The campaigns have filed two disclosure statements with us, and the Board distributed the first round of public funds to candidates on March 3, totaling \$165,511. The next payment, the last one before the election, is scheduled for Thursday, March 18. The Board is also preparing for any additional special elections that may arise in the coming fiscal year.

Looking further ahead, we are preparing to publish a citywide Voter Guide in the fall of 2010 if the recently-announced Charter Revision Commission places proposals on this year's ballot, as has been reported in the press.

The CFB has started planning for the 2013 election cycle as well. The first disclosure filing for candidates in the 2013 elections is due July 15, 2010. We believe the 2013 elections will be competitive, and expect an influx of candidates will file for city office in July. In response to the feedback we have received from candidates, we are reviewing and revising all of our communications with candidates in an effort to clarify and improve them for the 2013 elections. Focus groups we conducted with campaigns to evaluate our C-SMART filing software and C-Access information portal have provided us with additional feedback that will help us continue utilizing new technologies to meet candidates' needs.

### **FY2011 Budget**

Pursuant to the New York City Charter, Section 1052(c), the Board will submit its estimated budget for fiscal year 2011 to the Mayor at the end of March. This estimate will be included in the Mayor's Executive Budget. The budget will be significantly less than last year, as it is not a citywide election year. As noted, it will contain funds to administer the Program for potential special elections, and for a potential citywide Voter Guide.

As always, the CFB looks forward to continuing to work with the Council to make the Program more effective and efficient. Going forward, we hope to place a greater emphasis on outreach and collaboration with the Council. As part of this effort, we have appointed a Director of External Affairs, Eric Friedman, who will be our point person for working with you and your colleagues during the legislative process.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to answering any questions you may have.