



THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Bill de Blasio – PUBLIC ADVOCATE

**Statement by Public Advocate Bill de Blasio for the New York City
Campaign Finance Board Public Hearing on Independent Expenditures**

March 10, 2011

Good morning. I would like to thank the New York City Campaign Finance Board for addressing this critical issue of independent expenditures in elections. I appreciate the opportunity to present to you on this important matter.

As the CFB has duly noted in their white paper on the disclosure of independent expenditures, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* opened the floodgates for increased corporate spending in our elections. According to a 2010 Washington Post/ABC News poll, 8-in-10 Americans oppose the high court's decision to allow unfettered corporate political spending. Moreover, a recent NY Times/CBS Poll found that 92 percent of Americans want full disclosure of campaign contributors.

In December, my office produced a report looking the impact of the *Citizens United* decision on the 2010 midterm elections. The analysis offered a disturbing first glimpse of the potential impact of the *Citizens United* ruling on political spending. With more than \$4 billion in total spending, the 2010 election was the most expensive midterm election in U.S. history. Outside groups spent over \$290 million on federal independent expenditures with much of that spending taking advantage of changes in the law that open the door to anonymous corporate donations.

Requiring disclosure of independent expenditures is an important first step in protecting our elections from corporate influence. However, in order for this disclosure provide the level of transparency that New York City voters demand, it is paramount that independent spending groups divulge their funding sources. Because the IRS does not require nonprofit 501(c)(4) or (c)(6) organizations to report their donors publicly, these nonprofits have emerged as the preferred vehicle for for-profit corporations to secretly influence election outcomes. Fortunately, New Yorkers can shine a light on these deceptive practices through our disclosure requirements. Recognizing that New York City Campaign Finance Board is looked to as a model of reform, I urge the CFB to require full disclosure of funding sources to independent expenditure groups in which the aggregate contribution during an election cycle exceeds \$1,000.

I thank you again for this opportunity to present on this critical topic. I look forward to working together in the coming months to see this Charter mandate successfully implemented.

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