



New York City Campaign Finance Board

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

City Council Committees on Finance and Governmental Operations May 13, 2013

Good afternoon, Chairpersons Brewer and Recchia, and committee members. I am Amy Loprest, Executive Director of the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). With me today are General Counsel Sue Ellen Dodell and External Affairs Director Eric Friedman.

As always, we thank you for your support of the Campaign Finance Program. As we enter the homestretch of the 2013 elections, New Yorkers can be confident that their concerns, not those of special interests, will be the center of attention thanks to the Council's strong commitment to the Campaign Finance Act.

Earlier this month, we welcomed the court decision in the *McDonald v. CFB* case upholding the common-sense contribution limits established in the Act. The decision ensures that those limits, not the State's, will apply equally to all candidates for office in New York City. New York State has the highest contribution limits in the country, behind

a dozen states that have no limits at all. Our limits guarantee that the voices of average New Yorkers are not drowned out by big donors writing \$60,000 checks.

The continuing debate over reforming New York State's campaign finance laws has focused particular attention on the Campaign Finance Board. Legislative proposals introduced in the state Senate and adopted by the Assembly use New York City's Program as a model. In the past two weeks, I have testified at hearings held by both the Independent Democratic Conference and the Senate Elections Committee. The interest in our Program as we celebrate our 25th year is a testament to the City Council's ongoing participation in improving the Campaign Finance Act. We look forward to building on our strong working relationship in the coming year and beyond.

Pursuant to the New York City Charter, Section 1052(c), the Board submitted its budget for City Fiscal Year 2014 to the Mayor on March 20, 2013 and it was included in his Executive Budget. Our budget is attached to this testimony.

The Board's fiscal year 2014 budget is \$71,864,424. This amount reflects the additional costs of administering the Program in an election year. Specifically, the Board's budget request includes \$51,000,000 for public funds payments to candidates who participate in the Campaign Finance Program. The request also includes \$9,955,000 for the non-partisan Voter Guide that the Board publishes and mails to every New York City household with a registered voter and the costs to produce the Video Voter Guide. We anticipate producing 8.1 million copies of the print Guides for the 2013 primary and

general elections combined. The Guide will be printed in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Bengali. All candidates are invited to publish information about their campaigns in the Guide, which will also include information on the citywide Debate Program, and guidance on how and where to vote.

The projected costs for the Campaign Finance Fund and the Voter Guide are consistent with our experience in previous citywide elections and the number of candidates we project will participate in the Program in 2013. As in previous years, any funds remaining from these allocations after the elections are completed will be returned to the City's General Fund. Please note that we returned to the General Fund the \$41 million that was allocated to the Campaign Finance Fund for FY 2013 in anticipation of a possible June 2013 primary election date.

The CFB has contained operating costs where possible. We have reduced our OTPS allocation for fiscal year 2014 by two percent despite onetime charges related to the agency's scheduled office relocation in December 2013. Our personal service costs increase by \$600,000 due to increased staff needs for the election and beyond.

The CFB works every day to provide good value to the City for its investment in elections and to improve the service we provide. In particular, we always try to make it easier for campaigns to comply with CFB disclosure requirements. In 2012, we launched a new web-based disclosure application, Candidate Software for Managing and Reporting

Transactions (C-SMART) Web. All candidates are now using C-SMART Web, which gives campaigns more flexibility and security when filing disclosures with the Board.

We are nearly finished with all of the audits from the 2009 elections. To date, we have completed 224 out of 232 audits from that election cycle. We are implementing changes to our process that should increase the efficiency of the post-election audits for the 2013 elections.

Finally, our Voter Assistance Unit and the members of our Voter Assistance Advisory Committee have a comprehensive and robust plan for the NYC Votes campaign to increase voter participation in the 2013 elections. The CFB's 2012-2013 Voter Assistance Annual Report, issued in April, outlines some of those initiatives and recommends changes to modernize State election law, including nonpartisan election administration and instant runoff voting. We will be holding a public hearing this evening to discuss the report and our efforts to get more New Yorkers to register to vote and to cast their ballots on Election Day.

From administering the City's matching funds program, to making campaign finance data available via our searchable database, to our voter assistance efforts, the goal of everything that we do at the Campaign Finance Board is to increase New Yorkers' participation in our elections. Participation by New Yorkers living in every neighborhood, in every public school district, along every subway line and on every city

street is the key to a healthy democracy. Their participation ultimately determines whether candidates are accountable to the public interest.

As always, the CFB looks forward to working closely with the Council to accomplish this important mission. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.