



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0552-2002, **Version:** A

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### Proposed Res. No. 552-A

Resolution supporting the Clean Money, Clean Elections Act (A.3453A / S.3440A), a bill that would drastically improve the campaign finance system in New York State by lowering contribution limits, improving reporting requirements and enforcement, and most importantly, instituting a voluntary system of public financing of elections.

By Council Members Yassky, Brewer, DeBlasio, Barron, Davis, Gerson, Jackson, Koppell, Lopez, Martinez, Sanders, Vann and Gennaro; also Council Members Seabrook and Quinn.

Whereas, In 2003, Assemblymember Felix Ortiz and State Senator David Paterson introduced the Clean Money, Clean Elections Act (A.3453A and S.3440A), companion bills which would institute a voluntary system of public financing of statewide and legislative elections, whereby candidates who demonstrate broad public support and agree not to accept private campaign contributions would each receive a certain amount of public funds; and

Whereas, A system in which elected officials rely on wealthy private contributors to fund their campaigns diminishes the meaning of the right to vote and has a damaging effect on democracy, violating the rights of all citizens to fair representation in the political process; further, such a system fuels the public perception of conflicts of interest, giving rise to apathy and cynicism among the electorate, while making it almost impossible for challengers and non-traditional candidates to run for and win elected office; and

Whereas, The current campaign finance system in New York State is characterized by the undue influence of large campaign donors, with contribution limits many times higher than those allowed in most states and on the federal level; further, the system is plagued by poor reporting and virtually non-existent oversight or enforcement; and

Whereas, In New York State, 75% of the campaign dollars raised between 1997 and 2002 by

statewide and legislative candidates and parties came from contributions of \$1,000 or more; and

Whereas, Additionally, New York State incumbent legislators spend more than twice as much in campaign funds on average as their challengers, while winners in legislative contests, on average, spend twice as much as losing candidates; and

Whereas, Between 1997 and 2002, the New York State Legislature has had one of the highest incumbency rates in the nation, a staggering 98%; and

Whereas, In 1998, the New York City Council instituted a similar voluntary system of public financing which matches contributions up to \$250 at a rate of 4-to-1, one of the best campaign finance systems in operation today; this system has allowed many non-traditional candidates who previously did not have the resources to run a competitive campaign to win election to the Council; and

Whereas, A Clean Money, Clean Elections system like the City's would vastly improve the State's electoral process; making campaigns more balanced, fair and competitive as it has done in the City; and

Whereas, Clean Money, Clean Elections systems are currently in effect in Maine, Arizona, Massachusetts and Vermont; it is estimated that, in New York, Clean Money, Clean Elections public financing would cost the state no more than 1/10 of 1% of the state budget -- less than \$5 per voter per election; and

Whereas, A Clean Money, Clean Elections system would provide increased public funds in the event that a publicly funded candidate is outspent by a self-financed candidate or other non-publicly-funded candidate, assuring that the publicly funded candidate can compete fairly; and

Whereas, More than 80 organizations and 50 state legislators have endorsed Clean Money, Clean Elections' goal of voluntary public financing, and unlike many other reform proposals, there is no constitutional conflict between Clean Money, Clean Elections and the right to free speech, because Clean Money, Clean Elections is a voluntary system; and

Whereas, Clean Money, Clean Elections is a real solution to the long-standing and divisive problem of campaign finance reform; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York supports the Clean Money, Clean Elections Act (A.3453A / S.3440A), a bill that would drastically improve the campaign finance system in New York State by lowering contribution limits, improving reporting requirements and enforcement, and most importantly, instituting a voluntary system of public financing of elections.

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