



Subject: Grassroots Groups Call on Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the Democratic State Senate to Introduce Public Financing Legislation Before End of Session

Date: April 26th, 2019

Dear Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and members of the NY State Senate,

Thank you for your leadership throughout the first half of the legislative session. The passage of reforms to our voting laws, criminal justice system, and other core progressive priorities is encouraging and long overdue. We feel optimistic that with the newly elected Democratic State Senate majority, we are on a path to making New York a fairer, cleaner, kinder and more equitable state.

However, there were many disappointments in the 2019 budget, including the inability (or unwillingness) of legislators to legislate, and pass a clean public financing bill to enact a small donor matching system in New York. Instead, this responsibility was shifted from democratically elected legislators to an easily manipulated commission of political appointees.

This commission has the power to end fusion voting and create a public financing system that could be weak, punitive, or even useless. There is no guarantee that the bill will include the thoroughly researched \$6 to \$1 matching ratio. And worst of all, there is no guarantee that the contribution limits for candidates who opt out will be lowered. In other words, the very issues that members of the Senate and Assembly voiced concerns about are now out of their control.

This is why we call on you and the Senate Democrats to introduce and pass a clean public financing bill this session. We cannot depend on this commission to write a bill that will follow widely accepted guidelines from experts in the field, and include an independent enforcement model. In fact, the wording of the legislation to create this commission is so vague, it could potentially empower party machines by allowing them to dictate which candidates receive matching funds. There is also a legitimate concern that the commission itself violates the New York State constitution. What happens then?

A clean financing bill, written and debated by those we elected, not only has a far better chance to create an effective and equitable public financing system---it is also how our democracy is supposed to work. We elect you to write laws. We did not elect you to disempower yourselves and your constituents by giving your responsibilities to an unelected commission.

Why is this so important? The influence of big money in New York politics is why Albany has been unable to pass bold and just economic legislation for decades. It's what gave the IDC the leverage to create a caucus, and why legislators go to jail every year for corruption. Big money in politics is why we don't have stronger rent laws, updated infrastructure, and fully funded schools. It prevents us from creating new revenue streams like an expanded Millionaire's Tax, a Pied-a-Terre tax, closing the carried interest loophole, and many other progressive taxes that would not adversely affect working people, while providing funding for the programs working people need. **We will never fully solve the problems New Yorkers face until we rid our politics of the influence of big money.**

We want New York State to lead the nation, but not in the unfettered influence of corporations, lobbyists, Wall Street and the ultra wealthy in our government, and the highest rates of income and wealth inequality. **Public financing is too important to leave up to this commission.**

After years of stalled progress, it was the promise of a new progressive Senate working together with a historically progressive Assembly that galvanized voters across the state to elect this Senate majority. That promise was why we worked tirelessly to make NY true blue. It's time we fulfill those promises.

Signed The Grassroots Organizations Below:

1. American Promise Association New York Chapter
2. Bronx Progressives
3. Butternut Valley Indivisible
4. City Island Indivisible
5. Concerned Citizens For Change
6. Creative Resistance
7. Downtown Women for Change
8. Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance
9. Empire State Indivisible
10. Empire State Progressives
11. Flip Long Island
12. Greater NYC for Change
13. Hope From Hell's Kitchen Indivisible
14. Indivisible 10591
15. Indivisible BlueBlast!
16. Indivisible Briarcliff-Ossining
17. Indivisible Brooklyn
18. Indivisible Districts 6 & 7
19. Indivisible Harlem
20. Indivisible Heights Of Resistance
21. Indivisible Nation BK
22. Indivisible Rivertowns
23. Indivisible Rochester
24. Indivisible Scarsdale
25. Indivisible Ulster
26. IndivisibleWeStand UWS

27. Indivisible Westchester
28. Inwood Indivisible
29. Korean Americans for Political Advancement
30. MAYDAY America
31. Mount Vernon - Pelham Indivisible
32. Northwest Bronx Indivisible
33. NYCD16 Indivisible
34. NY Indivisible
35. NY Stony Point Democratic Committee
36. NYPAN
37. NYC Solidarity Sundays
38. Our Movement - The Future
39. Our Progressive Future
40. Progressive Action Of Lower Manhattan
41. Progressive Power Inwood Heights
42. Progressive Schenectady
43. Putnam Progressives
44. Rise and Resist
45. Rise Uptown
46. Rockland Citizens Action Network
47. Rockland United
48. Saratoga Progressive Action
49. Sexual Harassment Working Group
50. Staten Island Women Who March
51. Sunset Park Latino Democrats
52. Take Back 20
53. True Blue NY
54. United Thru Action
55. Upper West Side Action Group
56. Village Independent Democrats
57. We Make American
58. We The People Of Oswego Indivisible
59. Wolf-PAC NY
60. 7th Resist