

New York State Senate Committee on Elections  
Rochester, New York Public Hearing

May 28, 2009

Testimony of Nathan L. Jaschik

Honorable Senators: My name is Nathan L. Jaschik and I reside in the town of Brighton at 57 Southern Parkway. I am also the vice-president of Citizens for a Better New York, a grassroots organization focused on those process reforms that would make New York State government operate efficiently and effectively in dealing with the critical issues facing our state – and they are many. Although I am vice-president of Citizens for a Better New York, I should stress that my comments today are my own and not those of CFBNY.

I have lived in New York State for over 40 years, though I grew up in Washington, DC, an area with much beauty and opportunity. However, I have never regretted my move to this state – despite the weather - and feel that its natural and cultural assets are second to none. We had no peer for many years when it came to the quality of our labor force, our education, our infrastructure, and all of the other elements that contribute to a life worth living. Yet we now find ourselves with the highest levels of outmigration of our most skilled and educated citizens, public facilities long overdue for repair or replacement, and a tax burden that only accelerates these trends. On top of all this, we are now in the midst of a worldwide economic crisis

that requires us to devote the best thinking possible to reviving our state and making the most of its enormous potential. We cannot afford business as usual.

The unfortunate reality is that our systems of governance have become corrupted at all levels. This is not to say that you as individual Senators are corrupt; indeed you are not. But the system within which you carry out your duties is, and that system forces you – and your colleagues across the state and nation – into situations you do not deserve to be in. Paramount among them is the need to raise ever-increasing amounts of money in order to run for and stay in office and the reciprocal need to do what you can to be of assistance to those who have provided you with those funds. And who gets left out in this process? The folks who have put their faith in you and elected you to office.

I am sure that all of you chose your career in politics because of a sincere desire to be of service to the public and to do good. But your hands will be tied as long as the current system of funding election campaigns continues. That is why I commend you for your efforts today – to bring public campaign financing to New York State.

The only way to break this vicious cycle is to pass a Clean Elections Bill and bring clean elections to New York State just as it has been brought to Maine, Arizona, Connecticut, and local governments in several other states.

Although any of the three options you have drafted for comment – full clean elections, matching grants with triggers, or a hybrid – will move us on the right path, the closer you get to a full clean elections bill, the better.

Gentlemen, you have come to the home of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, individuals who knew injustice when they saw it and when they suffered under it. They did not sit on their hands and just complain, however. They enlisted others in their causes and moved a nation to action. You can do the same with your Senate colleagues. You have seen the problem and have described ways out of it. Bring the rest of the Senate on board and create the environment that will enable New York to deal with its problems, problems that threaten its very existence. Act now before it is too late.

Thank you for this opportunity.