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CITIZENS UNION APPLAUDS GOVERNOR CUOMO'S SUPPORT FOR CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Establishment of a Campaign Finance System Based on New York City Model Will Build on
Cuomo's First-Year Accomplishments in Changing Albany's Culture

Meaningful Redistricting Reform Must Also Be Realized

Statement by Dick Dadey, Executive Director

Citizens Union praises Governor Cuomo for announcing in his State of the State speech today his strong support for campaign finance reform.

Campaign finance reform has long been seen by Citizens Union as fundamental to changing the culture in Albany. For far too long, campaigns for state office have been characterized by large infusions of campaign dollars from a miniscule proportion of New Yorkers, many of whom have business before state government, creating the perception if not the reality of a transactional culture that benefits special interests at the expense of the public interest. Ethics reforms passed in 2011 were the first step in changing the culture of Albany, and campaign finance reform is critical to realizing meaningful reform in the way state government conducts the people's business.

Citizens Union supports the state's adoption of a matching public campaign finance system modeled on the New York City system. A matching system will result in dramatically lower caps on campaign contributions while encouraging candidates to seek donations from small donors by matching small-dollar contributions with public money. It will also strictly limit contributions from those doing business with state government. The Second Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals recently affirmed these essential elements of the New York City system, which was supported by Citizens Union through an amicus brief. Citizens Union also believes that adoption of a matching system must be accompanied by strong oversight and enforcement and enhanced transparency. A separate enforcement unit must be created within the State Board of Elections able to administer higher fines and proactively investigate possible infractions, and gridlock of board commissioners should not prevent investigations of alleged campaign finance abuses from proceeding.

While campaign finance reform is essential, redistricting reform must too be achieved in 2012. Governor Cuomo and 184 of 212 state legislators supported reforms or pledged to change the redistricting process during last year's legislative session. Governor Cuomo has honored his word and introduced a strong program bill in February 2011, and rightly threatened to veto lines drawn by the legislature-controlled LATFOR. The legislature must also keep their promises. The district maps adopted in 2012 must not be drawn by legislators. While the required earlier primary date may prevent robust statutory reform in 2012, substantial change of the redistricting process must be passed this year that has an impact on this and future redistricting cycles. If the legislature does not meet these standards, Governor Cuomo should exercise his

veto.



Citizens Union of the City of New York, a nonpartisan force for good government for more than 100 years, works to inform and engage New Yorkers, to ensure local and state government values its citizens, addresses critical issues, and operates in a fair, open, and fiscally sound manner.

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