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**Citizens Union Reaffirms Its Support For
A New York State Campaign Finance Public Matching Fund Program**
Historic Good Government Group Far Prefers a Matching Program over Full
Financing; Urges Governor and State Legislature to Pass Meaningful Campaign
Finance Reform Legislation Before Session Ends
*Good Government Group Believes Matching Program Is Best Use of Public Funds Because It
Still Allows for Voters to Participate in Democracy by Making Contributions Throughout
the Course of a Campaign*

Citizens Union today announced that it is reaffirming its support for a state campaign finance program that provides for matching funds as opposed to full public financing known as "Clean Money, Clean Elections." While supportive of public financing for political campaigns, the organization far prefers a program at the state level that would match funds to private contributions that are raised similar to the model in New York City, because it would not disenfranchise voters who desire to be contributors throughout the course of a candidate's campaign. In announcing its position today, the good government group known for bringing about political reform in the city and the state, is urging the state legislature, particularly the Assembly where the issue is actively being discussed, not to consider a full financing program but rather pass legislation that provides for a strong matching program.

To read the organization's full issue brief and position statement, click [here](#).

Citizens Union urges the Assembly to hold several public hearings on the issue of "full versus public matching" so that the citizens of New York can participate in a discussion with legislators on this important element of campaign finance reform.

Citizens Union also called upon the legislature and the governor to reach agreement before the end of June and pass meaningful campaign finance legislation that would lower sky-high contribution limits, close blatant loopholes, and strengthen what has largely been lax enforcement by the New York State Board of Elections.

"New York State needs to reduce the influence of special interests in Albany and lessen the potentially corrupting impact of large campaign contributions by bringing a publicly funded matching program to our state elections. But in doing so, we must not keep out voters who wish to make small contributions during

the course of a campaign. Keeping private funds in the mix will help candidates to earn public funds as they campaign since they will be matched against the funds they raise privately and allow voters to express support for their chosen candidates," said Dick Dadey, executive director of Citizens Union.


Citizens Union is concerned that full public financing limits citizens to contributing only during an early qualifying period that is long before campaigns peak and will have the unintended consequence of decreasing citizen participation in democracy and political campaigns. In addition to voting, the way most people express themselves in political campaigns is through modest contributions to their preferred candidates, which does not often occur until the campaign has reached the forefront of public attention.

A public matching funds system will:

- reduce the influence of special interests in elections and lessen the value of large contributions as long as the limits on the size of the contribution are low.
- increase the value of smaller gifts and empower contributors to make small gifts because of the added value of a public match at some multiple of a contribution up to a given amount, as public dollars are directly connected to the gift each contributor makes.
- allow contributors to give throughout the course of the campaign and help contribute positively to the progressive building of support for the candidate. Since many voters do not become fully engaged in campaigns until they are well underway, a public matching system allows these political expressions to be harnessed.
- expand the range and diversity of candidates who are financially able to run for office and make elections more competitive.
- allow for the state to provide public funds only to candidates who meet certain reporting and expenditure requirements throughout the course of the campaign, unlike full financing when one lump sum is provided upfront once a minimal threshold of private fundraising is met.

There will always be a lot of money waiting, and wanting, to be spent on campaigns and politics. Citizens Union is concerned that full public funding of candidate campaigns may simply force private contributions into political party committees and independent expenditure campaigns at a far greater level than currently exists. A matching system can help channel the inevitable flow of funds during a campaign into a well-regulated financing system, as well as extend the value of public dollars.

Public funding will not necessarily diminish the amount of money that is raised and spent for political campaigns, especially in New York State, nor is that necessarily the goal of campaign finance reform. Rather, public funding will reduce the dependence of candidates on large donors and special interests, while making it easier for challengers and political newcomers to compete effectively with incumbents and more established politicians.



Citizens Union of the City of New York, a non-partisan 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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