

October 13, 2016

Andrew Cuomo, Governor of New York
Assemblymember Carl Heastie, New York State Assembly Speaker
Assemblymember Brian Kolb, New York State Assembly Minority Leader
Senator John Flanagan, New York State Senate Majority Leader
Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, New York State Senate Democratic Leader
Senator Jeffrey Klein, New York State Senate Coalition Leader
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear New York State Leaders,

Nearly three years ago, the bi-partisan Moreland Commission to Investigate Public Corruption released its recommendations to combat corruption in state government. In its press release, the commission said that:

*The results [of their investigation] led to a conclusion that **reform cannot wait**. New York needs comprehensive reform to restore the public trust and **change the permissive culture of both illegal and legal corruption** in state government. (<http://on.ny.gov/2dmpBDP>)*

Within three years since the Moreland Commission recommendations, a Senate Majority leader, a Speaker of the Assembly and other state legislators have been sentenced to prison for corruption. Now, the U.S. Attorney and the New York State Attorney General have issued criminal complaints against former Executive Branch employees and others, citing alleged bribery and extortion.

As advocates, organizers, community, labor, good government, religious, civic and grassroots political organizations fighting for the people's issues in New York, we must ask that you join together to fix our disastrous campaign finance and elections system that undermines public trust and our democracy.

We call on each of you and the members of your administration and legislative bodies, to commit (or recommit) your support for the recommendations made by the Moreland Commission to Investigate Public Corruption and commit to enacting them into law **during the 2017 budget session**. Those recommendations include:

- ***Institute Public Financing of Campaigns for New York:*** *The Commission believes that public financing of campaigns, in the form of small donor matching funds, frees elected officials from reliance on massive donations from wealthy and powerful interests and invigorates citizens' democratic participation, increasing public accountability and renewing the public trust. Small donor matching also allows those without access to*

well-heeled interests and without the support of large independent expenditures to nevertheless compete in elections.

- ***Lower Contribution Limits, and Fix Loopholes:*** *Truly massive contributions – over \$50,000 to a statewide candidate for office and unlimited checks to party “housekeeping” accounts – are currently legal in New York. This must end. We recommend substantially lowering the contribution limits to political campaigns, and political parties. We recommend closing the so-called “LLC loophole” that allows certain, easily-formed companies to make contributions of up to \$150,000, and the party “housekeeping” account loophole that allows unlimited contributions to political parties. We also recommend new limits for transfers from political parties to campaigns.*
- ***Limit Use of Campaign Accounts:*** *We recommend tougher and more specific standards for restricting the personal use of campaign funds and for better disclosure of campaign expenditures. (See: <http://on.ny.gov/2dmpBDP> for further recommendations.)*

We should further build on the Moreland Commission recommendations by instituting a whole package of voting rights reforms in New York. New laws that modernize voting and elections and expand and protect the vote for New Yorkers are necessary to shift control of our democracy to the people and fully restore public trust.

According to the Moreland Commission, “Albany’s pay-to-play political culture is greased by a campaign finance system in which large donors set the legislative agenda.” Let that not be the case in 2017. New Yorkers recognize that we must build a democracy where all voices are heard. That is why 82 percent believe that ethics reform should be a legislative priority in Albany. New Yorkers know that barriers to democracy have concrete, pressing consequences: when wealthy special interests tip the scales in their favor, the impact is on every New Yorker’s bottom line – from the rent we pay to the schools our children attend.

Four of you (Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie and Senate Leaders Stewart-Cousins and Klein) are already lead sponsors of legislation to enact these changes. We now ask that all six of you commit to getting this done in early 2017.

Sincerely,

32BJ SEIU

ALIGN

Brennan Center for Justice

Central New York Citizens in Action

Citizen Action of New York

Citizens’ Environmental Coalition

Coalition for Economic Justice Buffalo

Common Cause/NY

Communications Workers of America District 1
Community Voices Heard
Democracy Matters
Democracy Spring NY
Demos
Every Voice
Human Services Council
Hunger Action Network of NYS
Greater NYC for Change
Interfaith Impact of NYS
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS
Long Island Progressive Coalition
The Long Island Civic Engagement Table
Make the Road NY
Met Council on Housing
Metro New York Health Care for All
New York Civic Engagement Table
New York Communities for Change
New York Paid Family Leave Coalition
New York State Council of Churches
New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)
Partnership for the Public Good Buffalo
Public Citizen
Represent.US
RWDSU
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
Strong Economy for All Coalition
Tenants PAC
UAW Region 9A
VOCAL NY
Westchester for Change
Working Families Party