

A GOVERNMENT AS GREAT AS OUR CITY

It seems each new day brings with it another disturbing report of a New York public official accused of malfeasance or arrested for corruption. And just as common are the stories of the rich and powerful having their voices heard above the rest of us because of weak laws and loopholes that allow money to permeate our elections. It is enough to shake one's faith in our system.

We can and must do better.

Throughout his career, Bill de Blasio has championed ethics reform and more transparency in government, and he will bring this commitment to City Hall as mayor.



The De Blasio Record on Good Government

As a City Council member and as Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has fought for good government—the kind that New Yorkers can trust and respect for its honesty and integrity.

Leading the Fight Against the Undemocratic Extension of Term Limits. As a City Council member in 2008, Bill de Blasio led the fight against Mayor Bloomberg's backroom deal to overturn the will of voters and give himself a third term in office.

Fighting Against Citizens United. The Citizens United decision delivered a body blow to our democracy and a fair and equitable election system. Over the past three years, Bill de Blasio has successfully pressured companies such as Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley to adopt policies against spending their corporate

treasury dollars in elections. In August 2010, de Blasio also founded the Coalition for Accountability in Political Spending (CAPS), the nation's first and only bipartisan coalition of elected officials dedicated to curbing corporate influence in our elections.

Reforming Practices at the Board of Elections. When a host of Election Day snafus in 2010 created chaos, and, in some cases, even disenfranchised voters, Bill de Blasio's office recorded and reported the problems, forcing the Board of Elections to improve some of its procedures for future elections.

Going Above and Beyond in Disclosure. From his first day in office as Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio began reporting all meetings with city lobbyists—publishing the information on his website, going above and beyond the disclosure required by law.

Spurring a Transparency Initiative at the City Council.

In 2010, Bill de Blasio called for a new searchable database of applications for City Council discretionary funding. After his activism, the Council eventually opened up to provide the information. The Daily News editorialized on this development, giving de Blasio kudos for his advocacy in pushing reforms forward.⁶⁸

Holding the Executive Branch Accountable for FOIL Compliance.

As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has monitored and reported on the city’s compliance with the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). De Blasio’s “Transparency Report Card” helps the public track which agencies have complied with their FOIL obligations—and which have not.



A Plan For a Government as Great as Our City

Bill de Blasio will bring his commitment to integrity and transparency to City Hall by instituting reforms that will give New Yorkers confidence that we have a government as strong as its people.

End Discretionary ‘Member Item’ Funding. The arrest of a sitting city councilman earlier this year over allegations that he planned to abuse his discretionary funding in a bribery scheme brought back painful memories of earlier scandals. At the same time, press reports have recounted allocation decisions used to punish members of the City Council who cross leadership.⁶⁹ The system is broken, and, as mayor, Bill de Blasio will use his power in the budget process to demand a ban on the member item system. In fact, Bill de Blasio believes passionately that participatory budgeting and RFP grant programs will actually better serve community groups.

Expand Participatory Budgeting. This year, more than 13,000 New Yorkers in eight City Council districts, in four of the five boroughs, directly decided how to allocate nearly \$10 million in local capital funding allocations that had

previously been decided solely by their council member through the non-transparent and all-too-often abused discretionary funding system.⁷⁰ New Yorkers worked together to identify local priorities, develop funding proposals, and then voted to decide what projects in their communities would be funded—joining residents of Chicago, Boston and cities around the world that have opened up local grant funding and increased citizen engagement in local communities through participatory budgeting. As mayor, Bill de Blasio will work to replace the broken member item system with a transparent, merit-based small grants process. Moreover, he will work to scale up participatory budgeting in council districts across New York City. Bill de Blasio will also pilot expanding participatory budgeting to broader pools of city grant funding and engage New Yorkers more deeply in setting priorities for their communities.

Strengthen Penalties For Officials Convicted of Corruption. Under the New York State Constitution, it is impossible to deny or diminish retirement benefits for current public officials. This means public officials convicted of corruption charges have continued to collect their pensions at taxpayer expense, even while serving jail time. To offset this loophole in the law, Bill de Blasio will work to enact legislation proposed by New York State’s Comptroller DiNapoli,⁷¹ which imposes a mandatory fine upon public officers convicted of felony offenses related to their official duties. Guilty officials would be forced to pay a penalty up to twice the amount they benefited from the committed crime.

Disclose All Contacts With Lobbyists. Building on his own practice as Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio will require that city officials in executive agencies publicly disclose meetings with registered lobbyists on a monthly basis. Regardless of whether discussions qualify as “lobbying communications” under the Administrative Code or not, all meetings requested by registered lobbyists would be disclosed along with a brief description of the subject matter covered in the meeting. These disclosures would be publicly available online.

Strengthening Independent Oversight of the City Council. While an inspector general’s office exists for executive agencies—with a commissioner who can only be removed for written, publicly filed cause—Bill de Blasio would push for legislation establishing a similar position in the City Council. The position would replace the now defunct Independent Compliance Office in the City Council, a short-lived position which, despite its name, lacked true

independence from the Council leadership. The new independent position would be nominated by the Council and approved by the mayor. To ensure the independence of this position, the office would have a set term of five years, a fixed salary that could not be decreased by the City Council, and would require at least five years of prior law enforcement experience. Staffing levels for the office would be fixed by law and would require agreement by the mayor to reduce. Among its functions, powers and duties, the office would investigate complaints from sources, or upon its own initiative, concerning alleged abuses and fraud.

Unlocking Public Information With FOIL Reform. Bill de Blasio will increase transparency with a series of reforms of the Freedom of Information Law. He will include FOIL statistics in the Mayor’s Management Report, mandate routine reports on outstanding FOIL requests to the Public Advocate and City Council, and establish a unified online source to file, process and track all FOIL requests. Bill de Blasio will also levy fines and penalties against city agencies that regularly duck and delay FOIL requests, and he will proactively post online information that is most-frequently sought by FOIL request.

Reforming Local Elections. Bill de Blasio will push for a number of reforms to make local elections more democratic and open to the people. This includes allowing same-day voter registration and making voter registration available online. Bill de Blasio also supports efforts that boost voter participation, such as allowing early voting and making election information materials available in multiple languages.