



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

# **On 1-Year Anniversary of Citizens United Decision, New York Electeds Launch Advocacy Campaign to Rein in Reckless Corporate Spending on Political Campaigns**

Daniel L. Squadron

January 21, 2011

ISSUE:

- [Campaign Finance](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 21, 2011

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio Launches Web Campaign to Push For Rapid Passage of State Senator Daniel Squadron and Assemblyman Rory Lancman's "Corporate Political Accountability to Shareholders" Act

Bill Will Rein in Reckless Independent Expenditures in New York by Requiring Shareholders to Approve Corporate Political Spending and Forcing Companies to

## Disclose Expenditures, Including the Business Rationale For the Spending

NEW YORK – Today, on the one-year anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision, Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Queens), State Senator Daniel Squadron (D-Brooklyn/Manhattan) and New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio launched an advocacy campaign in support of state legislation that would require corporations to fully disclose and obtain shareholder approval for their political spending. As part of this campaign, Public Advocate de Blasio is launching a webpage, <http://advocate.nyc.gov/albany-legislation>, where New Yorkers can lobby Albany to pass the Corporate Political Accountability to Shareholders Act (S00101 & A00696) and sign onto a petition in support of the bill.

This legislation, sponsored by Assemblyman Lancman and Senator Squadron, would help rein in reckless corporate spending on political campaigns in response to last year’s Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, which eliminated restrictions on independent corporate spending on political campaigns and advertising. The bill would require corporations making political expenditures to obtain prior shareholder approval and disclose the business rationale behind such expenditures.

“One year after the Citizens United decision, politics is being drowned in a flood of corporate political spending that may wash out the voice of the people,” said Senator Squadron. “This bill will make New York the national leader in closing the enormous problems that Citizens United has already created. I urge my colleagues to pass it now so we can begin to rein in powerful corporations’ unchecked political influence and bring much-needed transparency to the process.”

“Since the Citizens United decision a year ago, we have seen an explosion in corporate money muscling its way into our political system—often at odds with the interests of ordinary shareholders,” said Assemblyman Lancman. “New York needs to take the lead in protecting shareholders and our political system from letting the influence of corporate political money spread any further.”

“On the one year anniversary of Citizens United New Yorkers can help make our state a pioneer in the national fight to reverse the effects of the Supreme Court’s decision. Last year we witnessed non-profits, like Governor Pataki’s Revere America, funnel millions of dollars into New York congressional races while hiding any corporate contributions from shareholders and the public,” said Public Advocate Bill

de Blasio. “Senator Squadron’s and Assembly Member Lancman’s vital legislation would help stem the tide of secret political spending in our state by requiring corporations to be more transparent and accountable when they put money in our elections.”

The legislation requires that any corporation—domestic or foreign—making political donations to New York state campaigns must:

Obtain prior approval of a majority of its shareholders on an annual basis before making such donations, up to a stated aggregate amount.

Disclose to its shareholders and the New York Secretary of State an accounting of all corporate donations, including the identity of the candidates, committees and initiatives funded and the business rationale for such contributions.

“Efforts to unmask the influence of corporate money in our elections must move forward before the flood gates of campaign cash open even further.” said Jessica Wisneski, Legislative Director of Citizen Action of New York. “Passing the ‘Corporate Political Accountability to Shareholders’ Act along with a system of voluntary publicly-financed fair elections would make New York a national leader in standing up to corporate political bad actors and regain democracy for the people.”

“The Brennan Center encourages states to address the impact of Citizens United in a holistic way. Not only do states need to improve their campaign finance disclosure laws to provide transparency to voters, states like New York also need to update their corporate laws to empower shareholders impacted by corporate political spending,” said Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, Counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

In December, Public Advocate de Blasio released a comprehensive report analyzing the broad impact of U.S. Supreme Court’s Citizens United ruling in the 2010 election cycle. The report reveals that the Court’s decision led to significant secret spending this election cycle and that groups which kept their funders hidden from the public spent more money on negative ads than groups that adhered to pre-Citizens United disclosure rules.

A full copy of the report is available here: <http://advocate.nyc.gov/files/12-06-10CitizensUnitedReport.pdf>