



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

Bill Would Require Disclosure of Spending for School Budget Votes

KENNETH P. LAVALLE June 2, 2011

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New legislation sponsored by Senator Kenneth LaValle and Assemblymember Sam Hoyt (A7223/S5071) would amend state election law to require reporting by groups that spend \$1,000 or more to influence public votes on school district budget votes outside of the “Big Five” city school districts. While there are currently disclosure requirements for monies spent on local school board elections, none are required for local school budget votes.

Under existing law, taxpayers and voters have no way to obtain information about spending by interests attempting to influence the outcome of school district budget proposal votes. Current education law requires school board candidates to report locally to school clerks and to the Commissioner of the Department of Education on their fundraising and spending for local school board races, but this is not required of those campaigning to support or defeat school budget votes.

“This bill promotes transparency, accountability and provides information for citizens about what groups are involved in school budget votes,” LaValle said.

The legislation adds school budget votes to the New York State Election Law provision that requires those interests that are supporting or opposing local ballot proposals to report their activities and spending when they spend \$1,000 or more to influence votes, adding an

element of transparency to these critical local elections and preventing anonymous mass mailings like those sent to voters last week prior to the Albany School District budget vote.

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and the League of Women Voters of New York State support the legislation. The bill is currently in the Assembly Education Committee and the Senate Elections Committee.