



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Senator Gianaris Introduces Legislation Preventing Public Reimbursement to Campaign Committees for Legal Defense

MICHAEL GIANARIS December 30, 2014

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS, ETHICS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

(Albany, NY) Outraged that New York State must use public monies to reimburse a campaign committee for more than \$1.5 million in legal defense fees and upwards of \$560,000 more to a legal defense fund, Senator Michael Gianaris announced that he will introduce legislation to prevent any such payouts in the future. Senator Gianaris' legislation will amend Section 19 of the Public Officers Law to prevent state reimbursement to legal defense funds and campaign committees for legal defense in criminal proceedings. Assemblyman Brian Kavanaugh will sponsor the bill in the New York State Assembly.

"It is sadly typical in the upside-down world of Albany that public financing for campaign committees only exists for those accused of crimes," said **Senator Gianaris**. "This multi-million dollar payout is a glaring example of the desperate need to reform New York State election law, and we need to close this loophole immediately."

Just last week the Attorney General's office was forced by statute to approve reimbursing former Senator Joseph Bruno's long dormant campaign committee to the tune of \$1.51 million for legal fees accrued in defense of corruption and bribery charges. In addition, the state must reimburse a legal defense fund Bruno created in 2009 for an additional \$564,547. As of now, state employees are entitled to reimbursement for legal defense if the charges in question arose from their official duties and are subsequently dropped or the accused is acquitted. Senator Gianaris' bill would change current law so that neither campaign committees nor legal defense funds would be eligible for reimbursement, thus preventing any future payouts similar to the Bruno case.

The proposal will also require that any legal defense funds raised be utilized in full before any public reimbursement takes place, in order to ensure that public funds are protected.

Senator Gianaris has long been a leading advocate for ethics reform, and election law reform in particular, and believes this loophole needs to be closed immediately.

#