



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Murphy grills de Blasio on why he should be trusted at hearing

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ALBANY, NY - State Senator Terrence Murphy and Mayor Bill de Blasio met face to face for the first time today. Senator Murphy questioned the New York City Mayor during a hearing of the Senate Education Committee on an extension of Mayoral Control for New York City. The system was implemented by the state legislature in 2002 following years of corruption investigations involving pay-to-play, self-dealing, rewarding politically connected contractors at the New York City Board of Education and School Construction Authority.

"The result of all this corruption was that it was our children who suffered" Murphy said, "I asked the Mayor convince me why I should vote to extend the trust of Mayoral control in his administration. There's one thing that the Mayor forgot to say and that's the trust factor. You have to have the trust of the people."

An ongoing criminal inquiry by the United States Attorney for the Southern District is examining the Mayor's fundraising apparatus, including several non-profits he set up to advocate for causes including Universal pre-kindergarten. These charities accepted six figure contributions from unions and businesses who were otherwise prohibited from giving more than \$400 to the Mayor directly.

Although NY1 revealed the City's conflict of interest board sent the Mayor a letter warning him against soliciting donations from entities that have matters "pending or about to be pending" before the City, Politico New York reported that over 62% of the contributions to these charities came from entities seeking favors.

Murphy indicated that these matters create the appearance of a conflict of interest. "Why I should vote for mayoral control with all the allegations that are going on in your office?" he asked during the hearing.

The Mayor did not answer the question as to why he could be trusted directly. Some of these same individuals and group that were solicited are implicated in a separate investigation that was referred to the Manhattan District Attorney for criminal prosecution by the independent enforcement counsel at the State Board of Elections for circumventing lawful contribution limits by transferring contributions far in excess of the legal limit through straw donor committees.

Jennifer Rodgers, former assistant U.S. Attorney and current executive director of the Center For The Advancement of Public Integrity at Columbia University, told the Gotham Gazette that after reviewing the state statutes and the State Board of Elections' report, she thinks "there is good reason to believe the law was violated by the Mayor and his associates."

"The Mayor is essentially asking us for an extension of a system that was put into place to end to the self-dealing and corruption from the days of organizations like the school construction authority whose three trustees are now appointed by the Mayor himself," Murphy said. "Yet we learn more everyday about how the very practices Mayoral Control sought to end seem to be returning. I would just like to say that what we have heard here today does not diminish either the merits or the critiques of mayoral control. Every school district is different and you will never hear me advocating for a one-size-fits-all approach to our kids. Our kids are more than just a test score."

He continued, "No matter what level of government we must all do the right thing in order to regain the trust of the public. I will always consider, when appropriate, mayoral control for those districts throughout the state which have requested it in a manner that is appropriate. Ultimately, we must do everything we can to give every child the opportunity to succeed and that begins with a quality education."