

September 2, 2014
Senator Tony Avella
Responses to NYCKidsPac Questions –

a) Do you support Charter schools paying rent for public school space?

Yes I do. I am greatly concerned about the privatization of our public school system and we should not be allowing private for-profit entities to utilize public school space for free – especially when the NYC school system needs every dollar it can get to make sure that all of our students, whether they win a seat in a charter school or not, get the best public education possible.

b) Do you support the current Common Core?

While the Common Core standards may be an important step for the State to provide a quality and competitive education for our students, I believe it's necessary to listen to advocates who have begun to raise significant questions about the true efficacy of such programs.

More importantly however, I am troubled by the manner in which the state has sought to implement this program and I was the first to introduce legislation to place a three year moratorium on the implementation of Common Core. I believe the State Education Department must take the necessary time to create a curriculum which meets this standard, provide the necessary educational back-up materials as well as providing the support and training our teachers need to implement this program. It is patently unfair to hold our students and teachers to a standard which they have not been prepared to meet.

c) Do you support the current amount of testing in public schools?

I believe that there needs to be a delicate balance between giving children a quality education that encourages them to be life-long learners but also objectively gauges their performance so that our educators can ensure that they are providing that quality education.

d) Do you support the current teacher evaluation procedure?

It is quite unclear exactly what the teacher evaluation procedure is especially in light of the hurried and poorly communicated roll out of Common Core. As a result, I am unable to support an evaluation procedure that I and many others feel is too clouded.

e) Do you support the current campaign finance laws?

I am the sponsor of the “Clean Money, Clean Elections” bill which will create a fully public funded campaign finance system throughout the state.

The bill establishes a system under which candidates for governor, attorney general, comptroller, state senate, member of assembly or district attorney, who collects a set amount of small dollar contributions, will receive a fixed and equal amount of public financing for their political campaigns. This program will help eliminate the disproportionate influence of large contributions on the political process, remove access to wealth as a major determinant of a citizen's influence within the political

process, and restore the meaning of the principle of "one person, one vote." It would also help restore the rights of all citizens to equal and meaningful participation in the democratic process. Instituting a public financing program would restore the free-speech rights of non-wealthy candidates and voters by providing candidates with resources with which to communicate ideas with the electorate. Such a system would thus help restore the First Amendment rights of the electorate and candidates to be heard in the political process.

Additionally, a fully public funded campaign finance system like "Clean Money, Clean Elections" will give regular people an opportunity at winning office. It will also diminish the electorate's perception of domination of special interests and strengthen the public's confidence in the democratic process and institutions.

f) Do you support the current CFE & equitable funding and will you fight to state to comply

Yes I do support the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and I will continue to call on New York State to comply with the Court's mandate.

g) Do you support the lifting of the cap on charter schools?

No.