



February 1, 2007

The Honorable Jannie Blackwell  
City Hall, Room 408  
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290

Dear Councilwoman Blackwell:

I was disappointed to learn that Councilman Jim Kenney has put forth a proposal to eliminate caps on political donations to candidates running for office in Philadelphia. Although Councilman Kenney is right to raise the public dialogue over campaign financing, his proposal is ill-advised at best. Those who support such a proposal are signaling their support of the pay-to-play, machine-driven politics that reward the few at the expense of the many. For too long, our City politicians, and by extension, our city government, have been run in such a manner. ***It is time for a change***, and those of us in elected positions must set an example today for the candidates of tomorrow.

As a candidate for Mayor, I have agreed to run my campaign abiding by the rules which limit contributions even though the legality of such caps has turned into a complicated debate made all the more murky by lawyers and the courts. And, I will continue to abide by the caps despite my personal reservations that such caps at the current amounts limit the ability of non-wealthy or minority candidates to raise enough funds to compete in a media market as expensive as ours against those who are wealthy enough to fund their own campaigns without the benefit of donations.

In addition to that pledge, I also will continue my efforts to reform Campaign Finance laws in Philadelphia using my influence as Chairman of the State House Appropriations Committee. Personally, I believe public financing of elections would provide a level playing field for all candidates regardless of their personal financial wealth.

What is most important is that we find a solution that balances the public good with the need for candidates to compete in races that become more costly with each campaign season. If Council is determined to revisit the campaign finance laws at this time, then I believe the best course of action would be to increase the multiple by which the current caps are raised when personal spending by any mayoral candidate exceeds the limits set by Council. For example, if a candidate were to spend in excess of \$2 million of personal resources in a campaign, then the

limits on individual contributions should increase by a factor of four. Additional increases in personal resource expenditures would be coupled with increasing factors of escalation for individual contribution amounts. Coupled with requirements for 24-hour disclosure of any donation over \$1,000, this would move toward leveling the playing field while maintaining public scrutiny and preventing a return to the “Wild-West” days of old.

I believe it to be wholly irresponsible and counter to the wishes of Philadelphians to simply remove the campaign contribution limits based on one poll and the unfortunate tendencies of the media to hyperventilate over the inside-baseball questions of horse-race and fundraising positioning. Philadelphia faces serious challenges, and Philadelphians yearn for serious change. This race will be decided by which candidate offers the most compelling vision for a safer and better Philadelphia, as well as which candidate has the record to back up his or her rhetoric.

I strongly urge you to not give in to the tired practices of reactionary politics or the tendencies for corruption under unlimited campaign contributions. Please vote this measure down or choose the saner path of having the limits better reflect the influence of excessive personal contributions from wealthy candidates in our expensive media market.

Sincerely,

  
Dwight Evans