

Kolb: Excited for Senate Hearings on NYC Public Financing

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Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb and his conference presented a package of reform legislation last week that includes creating a system to recall state officials. One thing that is not on the Republican's to-do list is public financing of campaigns.

"It is the same old, same old public financing pitch" Kolb said of [Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's plan for a public campaign finance system](#). "That idea is not going to happen upstate because people don't want tax dollars going to campaigns."

Senate Republicans are also against public funding of campaigns and are holding a hearing in New York City in May to look at corruption in the system. The city's public finance system has been held up as a more ideal system by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Democrats.

When asked if he expected to hear stories about political corruption, Kolb responded: "I would hope so. This keeps being used as a model for reform, but we've seen that there have been problems. Look at John Liu and the irregularities with his fundraising, and he is using the public system. You also have the problem of having only rich people being able to run for public office. Bloomberg can write a check and go after a legislator who did something he didn't like. He can take the regular guy right out of the mix. So, I think we should have public hearings."

As for a recall system, Kolb says he does not think being able to recall officials will create instability in Albany or the need for more campaign cash. Kolb points out that 19 other states have the ability to recall officials, and around 12 legislators have been recalled in 36 recall elections that have taken place. The New York law would require a petition with signatures equaling 20 percent of the voters in the official's last election.

Kolb also wants to strip officials of their pensions if convicted of a crime and restrict the use of campaign cash so that legislators can't spend it on lawyers, cars and other luxuries. "Not enough punishment factors do exist. We've seen that you can have the toughest gun laws in the country but people still do bad things. Bad legislators are still going to do bad things but we want to try and restrict that as much as possible," Kolb said.

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