



Bill de Blasio's blatant campaign-finance hypocrisy

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Mayor de Blasio certainly has mastered the art of speaking from both sides of his mouth.

On the one side, he calls for “major reforms” in elections regarding polling sites and voter registration, pretending to defend the sanctity of New York’s elections. On the other, he defends skirting spending limits that are the subject of US attorney, Manhattan DA and FBI investigations.

It may be a bit much to call the mayor a hypocrite, but not that much.

On Jan. 4, the state Board of Elections penned a report recommending that the Manhattan DA seek criminal charges against de Blasio and his staffers for coordinating illicit campaign-finance spending, prompting Manhattan DA Cyrus Vance Jr. to investigate the mayor.

De Blasio is accused of engaging in “coordinated fundraising and expenditure of funds to evade to contribution limits.” He allegedly did that to get three friendly Democrats elected to the state Senate to counter longtime-frenemy Gov. Cuomo’s power in the body.

The Board of Elections report is pretty damning, citing “considerable evidence” of wrongdoing. “The de Blasio team solicited contributions for the benefit of the campaigns of Justin Wagner, Terry Gipson, and Cecilia Tkaczyk, and instructed contributors to route the donations through” political committees as straw donors, which then deposited the money with the candidates’ own committees.

This funneling of funds through the various committees was done “in order to evade contribution limits and to disguise the true names of the contributors.”

More than a decade ago, as a city councilman, de Blasio pushed for reforms to the city’s election laws regarding unions. He wanted the Campaign Finance Board to treat each union affiliate as a separate entity, so that each could contribute nearly \$5,000, instead of having the contribution limit apply to the entire umbrella union.

As The Post reported, “that piece of legislation allowed UNITE HERE — a union formerly run by the mayor’s cousin John Wilhelm — to pump more than \$77,000 into de Blasio’s 2013 mayoral campaign from chapters as far away as Honolulu.”

Now the same “downtrodden” unions are embroiled in de Blasio’s new scandal. As the BOE report explained, “The evidence indicates that de Blasio established a structure, both within and

outside of City Hall, and entered into an agreement with powerful unions — New York Hotel Trades Council and United Federation of Teachers . . . to raise and spend money to influence state Senate races.”

All three races received significant contributions from unions via straw donors, and received staffing support from unions. In fact, “the entire fundraising and campaign operation was run from City Hall by de Blasio staff in coordination with unions.”

A snippet of the transactions the BOE examined for one of the straw-donor committees reveals contributions totaling over \$375,000 from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, United Healthcare Workers East (1199SEIU), New York State Nurses Association, Communications Workers of America and 32BJ United American Dream Fund (32BJSEIU).

This recent scandal also comes on the heels of significant blows to the state Democratic Party. Just last year, former Democratic Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver was convicted of taking millions in bribes for his unwavering support for real-estate tax subsidies. (Republicans look bad, too: former GOP Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos was indicted around the same time.)

It was only a few months ago that Bharara announced Cuomo wouldn’t be charged for disbanding his own corruption investigation commission — the commission whose work led to Silver’s and Skelos’ indictments.

De Blasio attempts to sound the reformer from the left side of his mouth; he attempts to defend his illegal campaign-finance practices from the right side. What comes out is hypocritical gobbledygook.

There’s no doubt New York needs election-law changes. The campaign-finance rules unfairly benefit those in power — especially when they apply two standards for two-faced politicians like de Blasio.

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