



New York City Campaign Finance Board

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**Testimony of Eric Friedman
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**City Council Committee on Technology
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Good afternoon Chair Vacca, and the members of the Technology Committee. My name is Eric Friedman, and I am Assistant Executive Director for Public Affairs at the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). My colleagues at the CFB and I thank you for the opportunity to testify here today about our experiences webcasting public meetings of the Board.

A central aim of the Campaign Finance Board is to encourage more New Yorkers to access the political process. Our work amplifies the voice of average New Yorkers by making their small contributions to candidates more meaningful, and offers New Yorkers a window into the political process by providing a trusted source of information about candidates, campaigns, and elections.

Disclosure and openness is fundamental to our work. Since our inception, we have sought to apply new technologies to the mission of greater transparency. We provided online access to campaign finance information filed by campaigns long before “open data” became a rallying cry for those seeking information about the workings of government. When it became clear to us that readily available technology could help us provide greater access to our meetings, hearings, and events, we moved ahead.

Since March of 2011, the CFB has been webcasting public meetings and hearings of our Board, of our Voter Assistance Advisory Committee, and other events of interest. The demand for the service became immediately clear. Over the past three years, nearly 3,000 viewers have logged more than 100,000 minutes watching more than 60 events over our live stream.

The audience is significant, but it is certainly modest, as are our needs. We broadcast a standing monthly meeting of the Board, and a limited number of other events spread throughout the year. Thankfully, we are able to meet our needs with a modest investment.

To create the video, we use a camcorder and a dedicated computer in conjunction with the sound system we have long used to amplify and record our Board meetings. To stream and archive the video, we use Livestream, a service based in New York City. The video stream and archive are embedded on a dedicated page on our agency website. We have uploaded some of these events and videos to our agency's YouTube page as well.

We commend the Council for Local Law 103 of 2013, which requires all public meetings be webcast, and for today's consideration of Intro 28, which would extend the requirement to community boards. There are many ways for New Yorkers to engage with government, but not nearly enough do. Requiring agencies, commissions, City Council committees, and community boards to conduct their business in full view of anyone with a web browser can and will help make government more understandable, accessible, and open. We hope our experience can be instructive in this regard.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.