



## **New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics**

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### **JCOPE Settles Alleged Lobbying Act Violations Related to Campaign for One New York Donations**

*Donations Made After Recommendation by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio*

**(ALBANY, NY) March 9, 2021** – The New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (“Commission”) today announced that it has reached a settlement agreement with Kasirer, LLC as part of its long-running probe into donations made to the Campaign for One New York (“CONY”) by entities lobbying the City of New York. The Commission’s ongoing investigation related to certain donations to CONY has resulted in \$130,000 in settlement payments to date.

The Lobbying Act prohibits lobbyists and their clients from giving gifts to a public official, which includes gifts to third parties on behalf of or at the designation or recommendation of such public official. CONY was a not-for-profit corporation formed in late 2013 by Bill Hyers, Stephanie Yazgi and Ross Offinger, three former campaign officials of Mayor Bill de Blasio (“the Mayor”) for which the Mayor sought and obtained support for his legislative and policy objectives. Offinger, who had served as a fundraiser for the Mayor’s campaign, became CONY’s treasurer and chief fundraiser.

Kasirer, LLC, the top lobbyist in New York state as ranked by compensation for its services, has agreed to pay \$5,000 to settle the alleged Lobbying Act violations that were part of the Commission’s investigation. In the settlement, the company stipulates that the Mayor spoke to its president, Suri Kasirer, in March 2015 and asked for assistance in raising money for CONY. Ms. Kasirer then spoke with other company employees about the Mayor’s request, and within a few weeks, employees of the company contacted two of its clients, which resulted in donations of \$5,000 and \$10,000. A few weeks later, those donations were collected and delivery to CONY was arranged by Kasirer LLC.

Kasirer, LLC acknowledges that the Lobbying Act prohibits a lobbyist with business before the State or the City from offering or giving gifts to a public official, unless the circumstances are such that it is not reasonable to infer that the gift was meant to influence that public official. The company was fully cooperative with the Commission.

As mentioned above, this settlement agreement is the latest to arise out of an investigation that began in 2015 in which the Commission learned of lobbyists and clients of lobbyists who, while actively

lobbying the Mayor and other New York City officials, donated to CONY at the request of either the Mayor or Ross Offinger in violation of the gift restrictions in the Lobbying Act and related regulations.

In 2019, the Commission reached four separate settlements of allegations of Lobbying Act Violations with developers Douglaston Development LLC, Brookfield Financial Properties, LP, Toll Brothers, Inc., Greenpoint Landing Developers, and Douglaston Development LLC for donations made to CONY by executives of those companies. Those companies settled the allegations against them with payments of \$10,000, \$30,000, \$15,000, and \$20,000, respectively. In those cases, the executives had either received a personal request from the Mayor or from Ross Offinger. In 2018, the Commission settled allegations of Lobbying Act violations with James Capalino, individually and on behalf of his business, James F. Capalino and Associates, Inc., as well as with New Yorkers for Clean, Livable, and Safe Streets (“NYCLASS”), its co-founder and president Steven Nislick, and board member Wendy Neu. Capalino paid a \$40,000 fine, while NYCLASS, Nislick, and Neu agreed to pay \$10,000 to settle the allegations. In both of those cases, donations were made following direct solicitations by the Mayor.

To read more about this settlement agreement as well as the prior CONY-related settlements, go to [www.jcope.ny.gov](http://www.jcope.ny.gov), click on the ‘Investigations’ tab, and then go to ‘Enforcement Actions.’