



Testimony to the NYC Quadrennial Advisory Commission

With More Pay Comes More Accountability for NYC Government Officials

Commission Should Recommend Ban on Third-Party Travel Payments

May 21, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the compensation of New York City elected officials, and the Quadrennial Advisory Commission (“the Commission”) process.

Reinvent Albany supports pay for government leaders that reflects the importance of their decisions on the everyday lives of New Yorkers and encourages high-quality candidates to seek public office.

However, if New York City’s government leaders expect more pay, they should expect more accountability – especially in the wake of the massive corruption scandals that recently rocked City Hall.

Reinvent Albany urges the Commission to couple any proposed salary increase with these three reasonable actions:

- 1. Banning third-party travel payments** (See our [full datasheet of travel payments](#) reported by elected officials from 2020-2024.)
- 2. Easier public access to financial disclosure statements**
- 3. Quadrennial commission appointment and process reforms**

Before getting into the details of these proposals, we want to note how important it is that the Quadrennial Commission is underway, and that the Mayor and Council agreed not to act to raise salaries without independent review. The Quadrennial Commission is an important safeguard against unreasonable, politicized pay raises and should be welcomed by government leaders for helping to legitimize regular, deserved salary increases. (We and our colleagues noted this in our [December 16, 2025](#) letter.)

Reinvent Albany Recommendations to the Quadrennial Commission

Ban Third-Party Travel Payments

We strongly believe that the risk of corruption is too great to continue to exempt travel payments from the city's gift ban. Allowing travel payments to be "gifted" to officials contributes to the public's perception that officials can be easily influenced by special interest groups. The solution is simple: if it is truly related to one's official public duties to attend a conference or visit a location, it should be paid for with taxpayer dollars.

Section 12-110 of the Administrative Code and Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB) rule 1-01(h) together are intended to curb corruption and conflict of interests. They recognize that third-party travel payments are a form of outside enrichment and require elected officials to report any payments over \$1,000 on their financial disclosure statements. This disclosure requirement is important, because it confirms that NYC government recognizes that third party travel benefits are a thing of value that public officials are getting because of the office they hold.

Because of this, we believe that eliminating third party travel reimbursements are within the purview of the Quadrennial Commission's recommendations. The central role of third party travel benefits in the massive [scandals of the Adams administration](#) underlines their potential for abuse, as does the [continued public scrutiny](#) over those paid to other elected officials.

We note that COIB is reviewing its regulations regarding gifts to the city, and recently [re-opened the public comment process](#) (see [our comments to COIB](#)).

To better understand the scope of these payments, [Reinvent Albany collated travel payments](#) reported by NYC elected officials on their financial disclosure statements. We found *at least* \$186,525 worth of travel reimbursements from outside parties from 2020-2024 (2025 is not yet publicly available). This is a conservative estimate because we used exact amounts when reported, or the minimum if only a range was provided.

The total value of travel payments reported by officials has increased steadily since 2020 and 2021, when travel was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic (data from before 2020 is not published on the COIB website, so it is not included in our analysis). In 2024, there were at least \$77,025 worth of travel payments, as shown below.

Minimum Value of Travel Payments Gifted to NYC Elected Official Financial, 2020-2024

Includes either minimum value of range or exact amount, when provided.

Year ▲	Total Reported
2020	\$3,000
2021	\$1,000
2022	\$66,000
2023	\$39,600
2024	\$77,025

Table: Reinvent Albany • Source: Summary of COIB Financial Disclosure Statements • Created with Datawrapper

A full list of the organizations providing travel payments is provided at the end of this testimony. Reinvent Albany takes no position on the particular policy or political issues discussed or raised by these outside organizations during these trips. We do, however, question whether it is good public policy for city travel to be funded by outside groups. If the trip is truly related to the official duties of elected officials, we see no reason why they should not be paid for by taxpayers – and subject to the same transparency and public scrutiny as they are now.

Make Financial Disclosure Statements More Usable by the Public

When the City Council [raised NYC elected official salaries in 2016](#), it recognized that improvements were needed to the transparency of financial disclosure statements, and passed legislation requiring that they be published online for elected officials.

Reinvent Albany believes there is more work to do to increase transparency of these disclosures, which can identify potential conflicts of interest and outside business dealings. We recommend the following:

- 1. Publish financial disclosure statements in an open data format,** allowing easier comparison and study by the public and Conflicts of Interest Board staff.
- 2. Publish more disclosure statements online, including all senior public officials** like commissioners, deputy mayors, and other board and commission members appointed by the Mayor.
- 3. No longer require notification to filers of requests for financial disclosure statements.** The State does *not* require the identity of a person

requesting a financial disclosure to be disclosed to the government official, nor should New York City. At the state level, it is simply submitted as a FOIL request.

Increase the Independence and Transparency of the Quadrennial Commission

As recommended in our [written testimony to the City Council from December 16, 2025](#), we support a quadrennial commission that is more independent, with:

- Two appointments from the Mayor;
- One from the Public Advocate;
- One from the Comptroller;
- One from the Speaker of the City Council; and
- The chair should be selected by the commission, not the Mayor.

We also support changes proposed by the [2015 Quadrennial Commission's report](#), including:

- Increasing the time allotted to the Commission to produce a report beyond the 75 days after appointment that is currently required;
- Codifying requirements for public hearings and transparency of Commission operations, including publishing materials, reports, etc.;
- Requiring elected officials to respond to requests for information by the Commission.

Additionally, given the experience of the 2015 Quadrennial Commission process where the [City Council gave itself a larger increase](#) than recommended by the Commission, we believe that the City Council should be required to provide a written explanation regarding any changes it makes to the Commission's recommendations prior to any hearing held on proposed legislation to implement the salary increase.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please email Rachael Fauss, Senior Policy Advisor, at rachael@reinventalbany.org.

Appendix: Travel Payments Made by Organizations to NYC Elected Officials

Minimum Value of Travel Payments Gifted by Organization, 2020-2024

Includes either minimum value of range or exact amount, when provided.

Organization Name ▲	Total Reported
America-Israel Friendship League (AIFL)	\$1,000
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys	\$1,000
Attorneys General Alliance	\$5,000
Climate Jobs Institute at Cornell University ILR School	\$20,000
Combat Antisemitism Movement	\$1,000
Community Leaders of America	\$4,000
Concordia	\$1,000
Consulate General of the Dominican Republic	\$1,000
Council For American Ireland Relations	\$7,000
Delta Air Lines	\$1,000
European Janusz Korczak Academy	\$7,000
Fair and Just Prosecution Organization	\$2,325
Fondazione Fratelli Tutti	\$1,000
Government of Colombia	\$1,000
Jewish Community Relations Council	\$98,600
Korean Prosecutor's Bar Association	\$1,000
LGBT Victory Institute Conference	\$1,000
Local Progress (a project of the Center for Popular Democracy)	\$18,000
Mobius Conference	\$1,000
Municipality of Bat Yam, Israel	\$1,000
New Deal Leaders	\$2,000
North Capital Forum	\$1,000
Northwestern University	\$2,000
Queens Economic Development Corporation	\$1,700
RFK Human Rights	\$3,000
The Blue Card	\$1,000
UJA-Federation of New York	\$1,000
Uzbekistan Mission at the U.N.	\$1,000

Table: Reinvent Albany • Source: Summary of Conflicts of Interest Board Financial Disclosure Statements • Created with Datawrapper