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Green rails at campaign finance

By ROBERT HARDT Jr.

Mark Green's campaign chairman yesterday charged that the city's system of publicly financing campaigns "failed completely" in his unsuccessful race against billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

"New York City does not now have campaign-finance reform at the mayoral level," declared John Siegal at a hearing held by the Campaign Finance Board.

Green spent $16.6 million — including $4.5 million in public matching funds — in the race while Bloomberg used a record-setting $69 million of his personal fortune to help him win City Hall.

Because Green was facing an opponent who decided not to take part in the campaign finance program — which strictly regulates spending by candidates — he was awarded an additional $720,000. But Siegal said that amount barely made a difference in the race.

"The system is broken and it must be fixed," he said.

"If the mayor-elect runs for a second term, no challenger who wishes to run a credible campaign can possibly participate in the campaign finance system," he said.

Siegal suggested the board consider awarding matching funds at a higher rate if a candidate is facing a high-spending opponent — or allowing the candidate enrolled in the program to opt out of the system completely.

Board chairman the Rev. Joseph O'Hare said he wasn't convinced the program needed a massive overhaul.

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