

# New Haven Register

Serving New Haven, CT



[News](#) > [New Haven](#)

## New Haven budget watchdog running for mayor; five Democrats now in race (video)

Published: Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Tweet 0

Digg 0

Recommend

share



[ShareThis](#)



3

By Abbe Smith, Register Staff

[asmith@nhregister.com](mailto:asmith@nhregister.com) / Twitter: [@abbegsmith](https://twitter.com/abbegsmith)

NEW HAVEN — A fourth Democrat is throwing his hat into the ring for the city’s top office – local psychotherapist and budget watchdog Jeffrey Kerekes.

The New Haven Citizens Action Network founder decided it was “now or never” and launched his campaign Tuesday from his home in Wooster Square. The event was small but Kerekes vowed to wage a big campaign to unseat Mayor John DeStefano Jr., who is seeking a 10th term.

“This is a campaign that I hope to be successful with. I am a serious candidate,” he said.

**See Kerekes speak here:**

Kerekes joins three other Democrats in challenging DeStefano for their party's nomination: local lawyer Clifton Graves Jr. and two former aldermen, Anthony Dawson and Robert Lee. Kerekes said if he does not win the Democratic nomination, he would petition to be on the ballot in November as an independent.

He vowed to pursue four main goals if elected: transparency and financial sustainability, better education reform, a safer city, and charter reform.

Kerekes sharply criticized the mayor on a number of fronts, saying people are "tired of Mayor DeStefano." He vowed to pursue term limits through charter reform. Kerekes criticized the mayor for giving overly generous benefits to union workers when he ran for governor and then turning around and pitting residents against workers this time around.

"If I am elected I am going to be in the unenviable position to take back some of the things the mayor has given," he said.

Kerekes said the city is in a growing financial crisis and that this year's lack of a tax increase is an election year tactic. When asked if he would raise taxes, Kerekes said all options are on the table, but he would start by cutting from the top. Pressed for specifics, he pointed to a "top-heavy" Board of Education administration and a "huge mayoral entourage," which he said includes unnecessary positions such as chief of staff, spokesman and liaisons. His campaign literature notes he would like to lower the tax rate.

Kerekes also charged that DeStefano "snubbed" the city's campaign public financing program, the Democracy Fund, partly so that he could collect large donations from companies that have contracts with the city.

According to his April 10 campaign finance disclosure statement, some of DeStefano's biggest contributors have close ties to construction and development companies, including R2D Corporation, which worked on numerous schools including East Rock School, Bishop Woods and Worthington Hooker, and Winstanley Enterprises, which is investing heavily in the city through such projects as Science Park, the Route 34 overhaul and the redevelopment of the Winchester Repeating Arms factory. Employees of those companies have donated thousands of dollars to DeStefano's campaign.

DeStefano responded through his campaign manager, Danny Kedem, saying he is committed to not raising taxes in tough economic times.

"That is why he is making tough choices like slashing his office by 20 percent this year alone," Kedem said. "However, the mayor believes the best way to create jobs and grow our economy is to create opportunities for kids to succeed, like extending school day hours, providing many after school programs and creating and maintaining New Haven Promise."

Regarding DeStefano's decision not to participate in the Democracy Fund, Kedem said the mayor "just didn't think it was succeeding in encouraging new candidates into the process and that is why he decided to opt out."

Call Abbe Smith at 203-789-5615. To receive breaking news first, simply text the word nhnews to 22700. Standard msg+data rates may apply.

- [Return to Paging Mode](#)

 [Reader Comments »](#)  
[View reader comments \(3\) »](#) [Comment on this story »](#)

 [Recommend](#)  Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

 [share](#)



 [ShareThis](#)



**RECOMMENDED FOR YOU**

- ▶ [How to Score a Free Hotel Upgrade](#)
- ▶ [DST Systems Gets Buyout Bids: Report](#)
- ▶ [IBM: Tech's Golden Oldie](#)
- ▶ [Police blotter for June 15, 2011](#)
- ▶ [Sailing to Gaza With Love on The Audacity of...](#)
- ▶ [Guilford votes to build \\$89.97M high school](#)

-- SPONSORED LINK --  
 The Easy Credit That Fueled Brazil's Boom Now Imperils It  
 (From DailyMe.com)

