

New Haven Register

Serving New Haven, CT



Presented by:  **SMILOW CANCER HOSPITAL
AT YALE-NEW HAVEN**

**New Haven Symphony
Orchestra – July 9**

Johnny Gill – July 16

The Robert Cray Band – July 23

NEW HAVEN
IT ALL HAPPENS HERE

Click here for more
information

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

3 Democrats running for New Haven mayor are on board with the Democracy Fund

Published: Wednesday, July 20, 2011

 Tweet 0

 0 Digg 

 Recommend

 share



 [ShareThis](#)



4

By Abbe Smith, Register Staff

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

NEW HAVEN — Three of the five Democrats running for mayor have signed contracts with the Democracy Fund, the city's clean elections program.

Mayor John DeStefano Jr., who helped create the Democracy Fund, is not participating. The other nonparticipant is local lawyer Clifton Graves Jr., who says his reason for opting against is to “level the playing field” with a nine-term incumbent who has a “war chest” of campaign funds.

But three candidates are playing by the Democracy Fund rules and hope to score matching funds and the \$17,000 grant. Those candidates are former Alderman Anthony Dawson and Robert Lee and budget watchdog Jeffrey Kerekes.

Candidates who participate in the Democracy Fund program sign a contract and agree to certain rules, including not accepting contributions from businesses and political action committees. Contributions cannot exceed \$340. By contrast, state statute allows up to \$1,000 for individual contributions.

For the first time this year, the Democracy Fund is requiring participating candidates to file financial disclosure forms using the State Election Enforcement Commission's electronic Campaign Reporting Information System,

which is where state candidates file. Democracy Fund administrator Robert Wechsler said this is the first time any municipal candidate in the state has filed using eCRIS. Wechsler said filing through eCRIS provides easy access to campaign fundraising and expenditure information for the public.

Wechsler said he went to Hartford to be trained in use of eCRIS and he is passing that training along to Democracy Fund candidates. This week, he sent letters to the Graves and DeStefano campaigns, urging them to file electronically through eCRIS as well. Graves said he would consider filing online in the future. Kerekes and Dawson already have used eCRIS.

The Democracy Fund lets citizens play a bigger role by providing 2-1 matching funds for the first \$25 of a contribution. The program also reduces need for fundraising so candidates can spend more time communicating with citizens.

To qualify for the matching funds, candidates must get 200 donations of at least \$10 and no more than \$350. To qualify for the \$17,000 grant, candidates must get on the ballot for either the primary in September or the November election. Also, the candidate must have an opponent who has raised or spent at least \$5,000. In the past, that last requirement has prevented DeStefano from getting the grant, as he did not have an opponent who raised enough money.

DeStefano has said his experience with the fund convinced him the program does not succeed in its goal of leveling the playing field with public money. He said he likes the idea of public financing for campaigns, but thinks the issue needs to be taken up at the state level.

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

- [1](#)
- [See Full Story](#)



Reader Comments »

[View reader comments \(4\) »](#) [Comment on this story »](#)

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

share



[ShareThis](#)

AdChoices 

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

- ▶ Home Construction Plays Catch Up
- ▶ House Approves Bill to Raise Debt Ceiling
- ▶ Look to Buy Gold at \$1,550
- ▶ Get ready for the heat: Temps into 90s expected...
- ▶ West Haven woman hit by car sues allegedly...
- ▶ Mayor to fight Board of Ed over temporary...

-- SPONSORED LINK --

The Scary Religious Ideology Behind Michele Bachmann's Anti-Gay...
 (From DailyMe.com)



FACTCHECK Missing or inaccurate information in this story? *Tell us.*

Submit