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# A Budget Watchdog Gets His Signatures

Connecticut Public Radio | By Uma Ramiah

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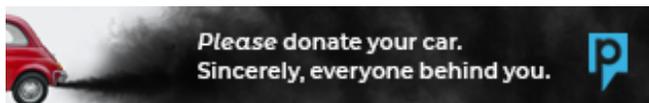


*Uma Ramiah*

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Jeffrey Kerekes is at his home -- or rather his headquarters -- in the Wooster Square neighborhood of New Haven. This is the last day of a two week struggle to find the 2100 signatures necessary to get him on the primary ballot. Now, he's telling a volunteer that the team has managed to get over 3500.



"Which is like, 35% of the percent of the people who voted for Mayor last time. It's almost half of the people that voted for DeStefano, he had 7,700 votes."

Kerekes wears many hats -- he's a realtor, psychotherapist and amateur photographer. He's also the first mayoral candidate to qualify for public financing from the New Haven Democracy Fund since John DeStefano himself.

Kerekes' "Come Back Home" platform would encourage city employees to live in New Haven -- instead of commuting in -- with a 5 year, 50% tax break. And with a goatee and thick, square framed glasses, he admits to being a bit of a budget wonk. He's studied the budget carefully, he says, and sees where changes can be made.

"If we actually did our budget in October instead of starting it in March," he says, "we would actually be able to budget on real numbers, not assumed numbers."

Half of New Haven's general fund budget comes from the state level, he says, but the city does its budget before the state does. That makes it harder to pass a balanced budget, Kerekes says, and lets the Mayor gloss over funding gaps.

"I think that what happens is that any politician that gets into office for so long can become complacent. They can consolidate power so it's really again just a one person show, which is sort of what I think we have now."

And with his 3500 signatures, he says, he's ready to challenge that.

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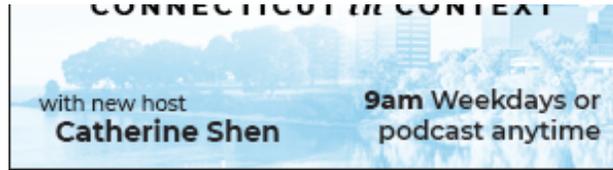
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