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Campaign Finance Reform: Will Anything Work?

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Introduction to the Symposium

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**CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM:
WILL ANYTHING WORK?,
THE INAUGURAL DAVID G. TRAGER
PUBLIC POLICY SYMPOSIUM
MARCH 7, 1997**

INTRODUCTION¹

The Honorable David G. Trager² was Dean of Brooklyn Law School from 1983 until 1993 when he became a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York. As Dean, he presided over a decade of unparalleled growth and progress at the Law School. During Judge Trager's tenure as Dean, he increased the Law School's financial assistance for students, expanded its faculty, and enhanced the school's clinical programs. He led the most ambitious expansion of the school's physical plant in its nearly 100-year history. The growth included the acquisition of One Boerum Place, now home to the school's administrative and clinical law offices, and the purchase and renovation of seven residential buildings in Brooklyn Heights to provide student housing for the first time in the school's history. Finally, the centerpiece of this expansion program was the construction of an eleven-story addition to the school's main building.

When Judge Trager resigned as Dean to become a federal judge, the faculty decided to honor his contributions as Dean by inaugurating a series of programs focusing on important issues of

¹ Written by the *Journal of Law and Policy*.

² Judge Trager received his LL.B. degree from Harvard Law School. He served as law clerk to Chief Judge Stanley H. Fuld and Associate Judge Kenneth H. Keating of the New York Court of Appeals. He was the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York from 1974 to 1978 and a Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School from 1978 to 1993.

public policy. Few issues of public policy are more significant than the way we as a nation fund political campaigns.

Questions of campaign financing were pushed to the center of the political stage in the 1996 elections as never before. Campaign giving and spending were at an all time high as was public concern with such issues. Current efforts to reform the campaign finance system have generated intense debate, not only among politicians and lawyers, but members of the public as well.

Reform legislation has frequently been stymied by partisan gridlock. Some proposals have centered on the constitutional ground created by the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo*, which held that restrictions on political funding are restrictions on political speech. Campaign finance issues, legal, political and constitutional, have moved to the top of the national agenda. But the persistent question remains: Will anything work?

For The Inaugural David G. Trager Public Policy Symposium, a number of the nation's leading experts and scholars gathered to discuss critical issues regarding campaign financing in an attempt to answer the question: Will anything work?