

From the Kingston Freeman, online:

ELECTION 2019: Soros-funded PAC has spent more than \$240K to boost Clegg in Ulster County DA race

[by Gundry MD](#)

KINGSTON, N.Y. — A political action committee funded by billionaire progressive philanthropist George Soros has dumped more than \$240,000 into the race for Ulster County district attorney in an attempt to generate voter support for Democratic candidate David Clegg.

The race between Clegg and Republican Michael J. Kavanagh is one of only two district attorney contests statewide to get money from the New York Justice and Public Safety PAC, though the nationwide Justice and Public Safety PAC has pumped millions of dollars into races across the U.S. in an effort to influence election outcomes.

Campaign finance records show Soros is the sole funder of the PAC.

According to the state Board of Elections, as of Wednesday

afternoon, [the New York Justice and Public Safety PAC spent \\$241,205.31 on 11 direct mailings on Clegg's behalf.](#)

"Prosecutors are the most powerful actors in the criminal justice system," the PAC stated when asked about its interest in the Ulster County race. "Justice & Public Safety supports candidates with the strongest commitment to making their jurisdictions safer and more just. We focus on jurisdictions with high levels of need.

"Democrat Dave Clegg is the only candidate that can be trusted to create a 21st century DA's office that keeps us safe," the PAC added.

The PAC did not respond before press time to questions about what it sees as "high levels of need" in Ulster County.

Clegg and Kavanaugh are vying to succeed Ulster County District Attorney Holley Carnright, a Republican who is stepping down after serving three four-year terms.

Kavanaugh is currently the county's chief assistant district attorney. The son of former Ulster County District Attorney and state Supreme Court Justice Michael Kavanaugh, he also has served as an assistant district attorney in Dutchess County

and as a private-practice defense attorney.

Clegg is a civil rights and civil law attorney who served as an Ulster County assistant public defender in the 1980s. He ran unsuccessfully in 2018 for the Democratic line in New York's 19th Congressional District race.

The content of at least two pro-Clegg mailings from the New York Justice and Public Safety PAC have generated significant controversy in the community.

One, in which Clegg is depicted shaking hands with Ismail Shabazz, a community activist and convicted felon, [prompted an outcry from Saugerties Police Chief Joseph Sinagra](#), president of the Mid-Hudson Association of Chiefs of Police, which covers Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties. Sinagra accused Clegg of “touting” his association with Shabazz and said Clegg’s candidacy “should offend every law-abiding citizen in Ulster County.”

Clegg has said he had no advance knowledge of the PAC 's mailer and called the use of the Shabazz photo “a faux pas, a mistake.”

“If they were trying to help me, they didn’t,” he said.

The PAC said it was unaware of Shabazz's criminal history (Shabazz spent two years in state prison after pleading guilty to selling guns to an undercover federal agent) when it used the photo, which was taken by local photographer Gloria Waslyn during Clegg's campaign kick-off event in January. Waslyn has said she did not give the PAC permission to use the photograph; the PAC said the photos it used were taken from "public websites."

On Wednesday, the Ulster County Republican Committee filed a complaint with the New York State Board of Elections, asking for an investigation into what the committee believes is evidence of collusion between Clegg and the New York Justice & Public Safety PAC.

GOP Committee Chairman Roger Rascoe pointed to a Facebook post by Clegg's campaign manager in which she states, "As many of you know, a pac sent out a mailing for us featuring David shaking Shabazz's hand." She went on to state that people making political hay of the mailing failed to notice a disclaimer at the bottom that indicated it "was not expressly authorized or requested by any candidate or any candidate's political committee or any of its agents."

Rascoe said he believe's the statement "a pac sent out a mailing for us" is proof of collusion or cooperation between the Clegg campaign and the PAC.

"It appears there was collusion between the committee and the PAC, and that is in violation of the law," Rascoe said. "I believe there was some type of coordination or collusion or knowledge, and I believe they should be investigated."

Clegg said previously that he has "no connection" to Soros' organization and that he is "restricted by campaign finance law from interfering with PAC activities."

A second controversial mailing suggests particular individuals were "below average" voters in comparison to their neighbors. It was unclear to whom the mailing was sent, though many who received it said they have voted in every election — in some cases including library and fire department elections — for decades.

The PAC did not respond by press time to an inquiry about whether it researched the voting records of those receiving the mailings prior to sending them out.