

# Kathy Hochul 'pay-to-play' donor keeps giving big to NY Democrats despite scandal

They're still paying to play!

New York Democrats took \$234,600 this week from a couple tied to a [no-bid, \\$637 million state contract](#) that has landed Gov. Kathy Hochul in hot water over \$300,000 in donations to her own campaign, records show.

"Kickback Kathy's corruption machine knows no bounds," state GOP Chair Nick Langworthy said about the Nov. 1 donations from Charlie and Nancy Tebele to the state Democratic Party.

The New Jersey-based Digital Gadgets landed the controversial deal after Hochul suspended state contract oversight rules as a new variant of the coronavirus swept the state last year, a [move she maintains was necessary](#) to keep schools open in early 2022.

[Reporting by the Albany Times Union](#) this summer highlighted how money flowed to Digital Gadgets while the Tebeles, who hosted two fundraisers for Hochul, and their family members continued giving to the embattled Democrat.



Rep. Lee Zeldin has criticized Gov. Hochul in the past over the alleged pay-to-play arrangement with Digital Gadgets.

William Farrington

[Her campaign also hired James Tebele](#), the undergrad son of Charlie and Nancy, as a financial associate for her campaign.

A Tebele spokesman, John Gallagher, suggested Charlie and Nancy gave to the state party to help Hochul amid [tightening polls against Rep. Lee Zeldin](#), whom she has criticized for voting against certifying the 2020 presidential results.

"The Tebele family continues to support moderate candidates in the face of billionaire Super PACs funding election deniers and politicians who threaten our democracy," Gallagher said.

Campaign filings show the younger Tebele chipped in \$63.42 to his boss's campaign on Oct. 24 while other campaign staffers appear to have given

her nothing.

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Digital Gadgets founder and CEO Charlie Tebele hosted two fundraisers for Hochul and gave money to the Democratic Party.

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Gov. Hochul's campaign hired James Tebele, the son of Charlie and Nancy, as a financial associate for her campaign.

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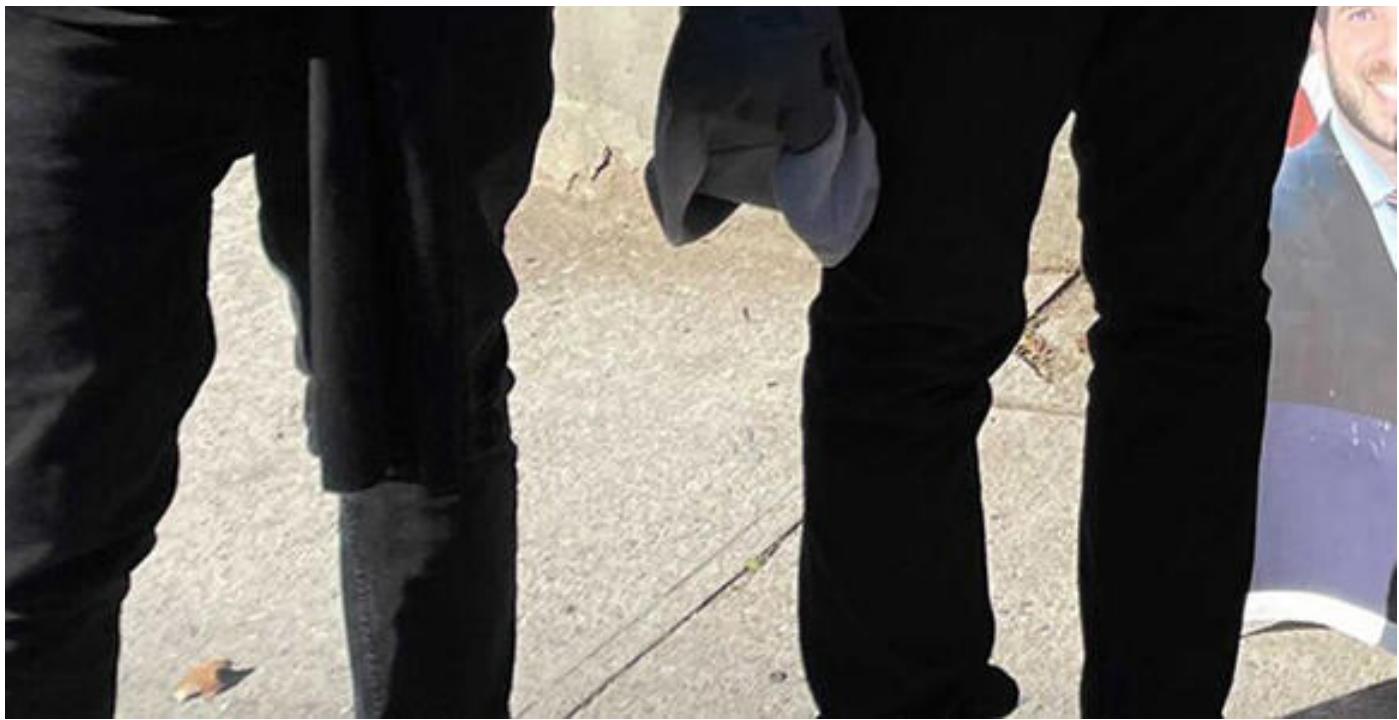
Hochul and the Tebeles have [denied any wrongdoing](#) while claiming the hefty price tag for rapid tests was necessary given the demand at the time.

Fellow Democrats have [shown little interest in launching a probe](#) despite Republican calls for an investigation into whether Hochul and the Tebeles colluded on a deal that saw the state pay roughly [twice as much for tests as](#)

California did when it bought directly from the manufacturer, the Times Union reported.

"New York Democrats' kick-back coverup makes more sense now that we see they're getting paid as well," Assembly Minority Leader Will Barclay said Thursday.





Gov. Hochul and the Tebeles denied any wrongdoing while claiming the hefty price tag for rapid tests was necessary.

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"Kathy Hochul's blatant pay-to-play scheme with the Tebele family cost taxpayers \$637 million and warrants an investigation. But instead of taking appropriate action, Democrats have said and done nothing. It's obviously their silence — and integrity — have been bought and paid for."

The state Democratic Party and Hochul campaign did not immediately provide comment Thursday.

Zeldin and other critics have attacked Hochul over the alleged pay-to-play arrangement with Digital Gadgets alongside other controversies concerning campaign cash raised from people representing business interests ranging from the [Buffalo Bills](#) to [state Medicaid contracts](#) to [cardboard](#).



Gov. Kathy Hochul spoke at a GOTV rally in Mount Vernon on Nov. 2, 2022.

Douglas Healey

The influx of campaign cash for state Democrats from the Tebeles this week similarly gave the GOP a layup ahead of the final day of voting on Nov. 8.

"Every New Yorker is paying a corruption tax for these crooked deals that are costing taxpayers billions," Langworthy said Thursday.

"Tuesday is the only chance to stop this brazen corruption by electing Lee Zeldin."