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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Devin Balkind runs for 2017 NYC Public Advocate
"The Politician in Your Pocket" at VoteDevin.com

September 14, NYC.   "I'm running as a politician you can reach with your smartphone -- a 'facilitator' rather than a 'representative' -- to help New Yorkers have a voice, participate, come to consensus, and get what they need." With leadership and expertise in using technology to bring communities together, Devin Balkind is running for New York City Public Advocate in 2017 in order to:

1) Put the public in charge of the Public Advocate's office;

2) Deliver results, not rhetoric; and

3) Hold government accountable the "open source" way.

A cornerstone of his candidacy is to have the City use smartphone and web applications that bring New Yorkers together to decide what the priorities of the Public Advocate should be and provide solutions accordingly. Devin's approach looks similar to how technology startups and open source communities get things done rather than traditional political campaigns.

1) Put the Public in Charge of the Public Advocate's Office

Devin says: "While we can't get everyone to agree on political issues and parties, we can bring people together around better processes for building consensus about what should be done and for holding public officials accountable for delivering real results."

Devin wants to "put process before politics" by using facilitation techniques and software technologies that enable the public to identify and prioritize issues they want the Public Advocate to address as well the actions they want the office to perform. He is committed to following the public's lead instead of the lead of advisors, political consultants and local power brokers.

"The future of politics is about meaningful and engrossing engagement that turns the public's interests into actions and their actions into real results. If we don't make political participation entertaining then politics will be dominated by entertainers with no real aptitude for the job -- and that can lead to grim results."

2. Deliver Results, Not Rhetoric

Technology makes it possible for a small office like the Public Advocate to have an enormous impact on the entire city. "The city releases a vast amount of data into the public domain, and, now, thanks to sophisticated yet accessible software, we can turn that into information the public can use to accomplish a variety of things, including: identifying waste, fraud and abuse; evaluating the success of projects and programs; and so much more." Instead of talking about these opportunities, Devin's campaign is already seizing them by producing web applications. One example is his "Capital Project Budget Database" that allows the public to browse and comment on nearly ten thousand capital projects that have received budget commitments from NYC government. "Our project database empowers New Yorkers to be watchdogs, analysts and investigators." People are invited to browse this database at projects.votedevin.com and add comments and questions to the various projects.

By leveraging existing open data resources and open source software applications, Devin can do a lot with a little, improving services while reducing costs. "Telling agencies about good technology solutions isn't enough. We'll show working demonstrations so New Yorkers can decide the value of civic technologies for themselves."

3. Holding Government Accountable the Open Source Way

The open source movement is the unsung hero of the last two decades of technology development. Not only has it produced the internet, but also a myriad of websites and applications like Wikipedia, WordPress and Linux. Every cool new "app" uses a ton of open source components, and these apps are transforming everything from dating to transportation systems. One thing open source hasn't transformed yet is politics --but we're changing that.

Our campaign is using tools and techniques developed by the open source movement to hold the government accountable for its actions and make its operations faster, better and cheaper. We're guided by a vision of turning politics from an act of "consumption," where citizens purchase candidates every four years with their voters, into an act of "participation," where citizens are constantly generating feedback, ideas, proposals and solutions. Devin believes that the Public Advocate and Borough Presidents, which are holdovers from the days of New York City's Board of Estimate, are the perfect vehicles for instituting new participatory processes. Devin says, "Let's create the Board of Estimate 2.0 where every New Yorker has the type of information and decision making opportunities that the original Board of Estimate had."

Devin continues, "We need to abandon the idea that voting every two to four years is enough to get the government we deserve. We need to elect politicians that commit to opening up the government and letting us in, so that we, the people, can participate in our own governance."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: See votedevin.com/media for more information and images; follow Devin on Twitter @devinbalkind and Facebook.com/votedevin
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