

# Former Obama organizer creates committee for Perkins' Senate seat

by *Bill Mahoney*

5:09 a.m. | Jan. 4, 2016

Brian Benjamin, a real estate developer and former organizer and fundraiser for President Obama, has formed a campaign committee for the state Senate seat held by Bill Perkins.

The committee was registered with the state Board of Elections on Dec. 24.

Perkins, a Democrat, is campaigning in a crowded primary to replace retiring U.S. Rep. Charlie Rangel.

Benjamin, who works as a director at Genesis Companies, a real estate developer, has served on Obama's national finance committee, as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, and coordinated the Harlem campaign for Gov. Andrew Cuomo. In 2011, he was backed by Assemblyman Keith Wright, one of Perkins' congressional opponents in this year's primary, in an unsuccessful bid for a district leader position.

Benjamin's plans weren't immediately clear; an email and call were not returned.

If Perkins loses the congressional primary, he could still run to keep his Senate seat, as the primary for federal offices is scheduled for June while the state primary is in September. He's run against a Wright ally in a Senate primary before: Basil Smikle was endorsed by the assemblyman's club in a 2010 race against Perkins.

Katrina Asante, the chief of staff to state Sen. Gustavo Rivera, created a committee last Monday to run for the seat held by Sen. Ruth Hassell-Thompson. The incumbent has said she does not plan to seek another term in the district that includes Mount Vernon and parts of the Bronx.

The Rev. Que English and Jamaal Bailey, an ally of Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, had both created committees for the seat.

Last month, Steven Glickman of Rochester created a committee to run for the seat held by Republican Sen. Richard Funke.

**POLITICO**