



*The first battle between the mayor and the City Council could be over pork barrel spending. Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio wants to ban it. The council has other ideas. Courtney Gross filed the following report.*

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It was a campaign pledge Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio often repeated.

"It is time to end the system of member items once and for all," he said in April.

But it's not exactly a popular concept on the other side of City Hall.

"We will work with him to make sure it's done right, we're hoping he will still understand the need for it, so it's a discussion we will have to have with the mayor," said Councilman Mark Weprin of Queens.

"I am sure that the mayor will be working with us. He's a former colleague. He knows that these funds go to programs of extreme value in many communities throughout the city," said Councilman James Vacca of the Bronx.

Member items make up a tiny portion, about \$50 million, of the city's \$70 billion budget.

But they have had their fair share of controversy.

Supporters say they provide necessary services to community groups. The mayor-elect says they have to go.

"I am a strong believer and support of member items. Accountability and transparency is key and any way of improving that moving forward, it needs to be looked at. But these member items are extremely vital and important to the constituencies that I represent," said Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito, who represents parts of Manhattan and the Bronx.

The leading candidates for speaker have all said the process of doling out this cash to community groups needs to change.

Perhaps giving each member an equal amount.

The de Blasio camp told NY1 the mayor-elect still plans to pursue a ban, potentially taking it out of the Council's hands entirely.

Those familiar with the member items process say the mayor-elect could not go forward with an outright ban without the City Council's approval. They say any sort of compromise could be worked out through budget negotiations.

"I think that we'll see small changes in the ways these are distributed. I think there will be more participation from more members of the council and I suspect that there will be an effort to try to address demonstrated needs in the district," said David Birdsell of Baruch College.

<http://www.ny1.com/content/200261/de-blasio-s-first-clash-with-council-could-be-over-pork-barrel-spending/>