



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Krueger Applauds "First Steps" of Ethics Reform

LIZ KRUEGER January 23, 2007

Many Reform Bills Senator Krueger has Championed were included in Today's Ethics Reforms; Calls Plan "a Down-Payment"

Albany—State Senator Liz Krueger today applauded Governor Spitzer and legislative leaders for "taking the necessary first steps on much needed ethics reform." The reforms include, among other measures, creating stronger ethics committees with oversight of the executive and legislative branches.

Many of these reforms stem from proposals that Krueger has championed in the Senate, including closure of the "revolving door" lobbying loophole, a ban on legislators accepting honoraria, as well as a gift ban for legislators and their staff.

"Ethics reform is key to an open and transparent State government," Krueger said. "It is very important that voters have faith in the system, and trust that we will hold ourselves to the highest standard. Strengthening the ethics commission will ensure there is a watch-dog with the political and functional will to fulfill its mission."

In 2006 Krueger proposed S6467 that would have closed the "revolving door" lobbying loophole that allows legislative staffers to retire and immediately become powerful paid lobbyists. The current law states that legislators must wait two years before lobbying the

Legislature, but until now their former staff members have been allowed to roam the Capitol halls, using connections made during time as legislative employees, to advance their new employer's agenda.

"People were able to leave the Capitol as a legislative staffer one day and return the next as a lobbyist," Krueger said. "Many companies certainly exploited the personal relationships that former staffers developed through day to day interaction, for their own advantage."

Senator Krueger also proposed a Senate rules change in both 2005 and 2007, that would have banned legislators from receiving gifts from lobbyists. At the time, Majority Leader Joe Bruno stated his support for such a ban, yet refused to allow the proposal to advance in the Senate Rules Committee.

"I'm glad Senator Bruno has come around to my point of view. However, the gift ban is representative of why reform cannot succeed if done little by little," Krueger said. "For instance, New York's laws defining how legislators may spend campaign monies are among the most lax in the nation. Therefore, a tit for tat arrangement circumvents the gift ban—I'll buy dinner, you donate to my campaign fund."

In 2006 Krueger proposed S6704 that would ban paid honoraria that State employees and legislators may currently accept.

"Governor Spitzer has shown a willingness to challenge the status quo, and the voters are clearly behind him," Krueger declared. "It will be tempting for some legislators to run to their constituents and say 'Look! Look! We're Reformers!' But the job is nowhere near done."

For her part, Krueger has more than two dozen reform proposals that remain stalled in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Among her proposed legislation is a bill that would bring clarity to how political candidates can spend campaign monies prior to and while in elected office, as well as the elimination of pensions for elected officials who have been convicted of a crime.

"Today's package is a down-payment on ethics reform," Krueger said. "We need comprehensive reform that includes ethics, campaign finance, budget and legislative rules measures, not just bits and pieces of each. This is a good start—but only a start."