



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Ethics Committee Launches Statewide Hearings on Ethics Reform Proposals

MALCOLM A. SMITH May 28, 2009

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Four Bills on Hearing Agenda: Commission on Governmental Ethics; Increased Disclosure; "Pay-to-Play" Contribution Limits; and Campaign Funds Personal-Use Restrictions

(Albany, NY) The New York State Senate Ethics Committee today began a series of three public hearings throughout the state to listen to comments and ideas from the public about several ethics reform proposals. The basis of the hearings are four bills, two each from Senator Liz Krueger and Senator Daniel Squadron.

- Commission on Governmental Ethics (bill draft, Squadron) Creates a nine-member commission to oversee both the executive and legislative branches of government and enforcement power over Article 14 of Election Law.
- Disclosure by Public Officials (bill draft, Squadron) Requires legislators to disclose business relationships; creates a new category for value of disclosure; and requires random audits of financial disclosure statements.
- "Pay-to-Play" Lobbyist and State Contractor Contribution Limits, Restrictions and Disclosure (S744A, Krueger): Lowers contributions from lobbyists and firms that receive state contracts per election to and requires lobbyist to disclose campaign contributions,

business relationships and public officials and family members.

- Campaign Funds Personal-Use and Disposal Restrictions (S743A, Krueger): Restricting campaign fund expenditures for personal use and prescribing proper use and disposal of campaign funds.

“Ethics reform is a crucial element to strengthening the public’s trust in the legislature,” said Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith. “As we have seen, a lack of enforcement coupled with little disclosure is not a healthy combination. I look forward to the series of hearings and public dialogue as a means to improving the legislative product.”

“We encourage the public to actively participate in these hearings, as we continue to improve upon ways to bring ethics reform to New York State Government,” said Senator John Sampson, Chair of the State Senate Committee on Ethics. “Integrity is unconditional, and it is important to commit ourselves to making this reality.”

“Ethics reform is key to an open, transparent and honest State government,” Senator Krueger said. “There are many important proposals, I am sponsoring two bills that would strengthen our ethics laws by ensuring that lobbyists do not have undue influence and that campaign funds are used for legitimate campaign expenses. It is very important that voters have faith in the system, and trust that legislators will hold themselves to the highest standard.”

“We can't fix ethics oversight unless we fix the structure of our oversight bodies,” said Senator Squadron. “That's why I have been working with partners and colleagues to create an independent ethics oversight body with strong enforcement powers. I look forward to receiving input from the public on our proposals and working toward quick passage of strong ethics reform legislation that will create truly independent oversight.”

These hearings, a dialogue between lawmakers and the public, are part of the Senate's commitment to a robust committee process, developing sound public and creating transparency in the legislative process.

The schedule for the three hearings are:

Thursday, May 28, 2009, 10 AM

250 Broadway, 19th Floor

New York, NY 10007

Friday, May 29, 2009, 11 AM

Erie County Legislature

92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor, Buffalo, NY

Tuesday, June 2, 2009, 11:30 AM

State Capitol, Room 124

Albany, NY 12207