



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

## 19 Senators Introduce Ethics Commission Reform Legislation

DANIEL L. SQUADRON June 2, 2009

### Independent Oversight Body Will Have Strong Enforcement Powers

Albany, NY—State Senator Daniel Squadron and 18 colleagues introduced legislation today to create an independent Commission on Governmental Ethics, which would oversee both the legislative and executive branches. The Commission would be comprised of three appointees chosen by the Governor and one each from the Comptroller, the Attorney General, the Senate Majority Leader, the Senate Minority Leader, the Assembly Speaker and the Assembly Minority Leader, a structure that would make it virtually impossible for one branch or one elected official to dominate the Commission. The bill is available for public comment at <http://www.nysenate.gov/legislation>.

"The time has come for ethics reform in Albany. We'll never fix ethics oversight unless we fix the structure of our oversight bodies. This legislation will create a truly independent commission to oversee all the branches of state government; I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass it into law," said State Senator Daniel Squadron, who sponsored the legislation.

"Ethics reform is key to restoring the public's trust in their elected representatives," said Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith. "I applaud Senator Squadron for taking the lead

on ethics reform to create an independent body with the strength and authority to bring real change to Albany."

"This is common sense legislation which will provide real oversight and create a more transparent and accountable government for the people of New York. The Senate Majority is making good on its promise to reform the Legislature, and I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this important legislation," said the Deputy Majority Leader, Senator Jeff Klein.

"Ethics reform is key to an open, transparent and honest State government," Senator Liz Krueger said. "It is very important that voters have faith in the system, and can trust that their elected officials will hold themselves to the highest standards. Creating a Commission on Governmental Ethics will ensure there is a watch-dog, separated from politics, with the power and autonomy to watch over both the executive and legislative branches."

"The public must know that their elected officials are acting ethically and with their best interests in mind," said bill co-sponsor Senator Thomas K. Duane (D WFP, Manhattan).

"Historically, New York State government has failed to be transparent and accountable to the people. Consolidating the duties of ethics and oversight into a single body, the proposed Commission on Governmental Ethics, will be an effective means of monitoring the workings of government and will be an important step toward restoring citizens' trust in their representatives."

Senator Eric T. Schneiderman said, "By passing these historic ethics reforms, we can finally change the culture of Albany to make it more transparent, independent and honest. This bipartisan ethics commission will bring meaningful oversight to the executive and legislative branches of our government, fundamentally changing the way business is done in the capital. This bill is the real deal."

"We took ethics reform from the realm of eye-rolling to eye-catching," said Senator José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx), a long-time advocate for more transparency and accountability in Albany. "I applaud the leadership of Senators Daniel Squadron and Liz Krueger, and I will work closely with them to ensure passage of these progressive reforms, including creation of the independent ethics commission."

"As a cosponsor of this important legislation, I fully support the creation of this independent commission on governmental ethics," said Senator William T. Stachowski. "No New York State resident should ever have any doubt about the integrity of his or her elected officials. We can't legislate ethical behavior, but what we can do is hold those in public service to the highest standards of conduct. This commission will help ensure that all branches of state government will live up to that code of honor and the trust that has been placed in them."

"All of the residents of New York State deserve a government structure that operates justly, with efficiency and with transparency. Therefore, balanced ethical oversight is an absolute necessity to ensure that these goals are met. I am pleased to co-sponsor this legislation, which will create a credible and effective entity to oversee the executive and legislative branches of our people's government," said State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

"As elected officials, we are stewards of the citizenry's interests, and must be held to the highest of standards," Senator Valesky, Vice President Pro-Tempore of the Senate, said. "The Senate is serious about ethics reform, and I am proud to co-sponsor this legislation, which is part of a seismic shift in the way the people's business is conducted in Albany."

"NYPIRG applauds Senator Squadron and his colleagues for the introduction of this important legislation," said Blair Horner, NYPIRG Legislative Director. "Independent and aggressive oversight of the state's ethics standards will help restore the public's confidence

in Albany.”

"Common Cause/NY commends Senator Squadron and the co-sponsors of this bill for introducing a bill to provide New York with a government ethics law that will establish meaningful independent ethics oversight and enforcement. Without such a system, public confidence in state government is unlikely to increase," said Susan Lerner, Executive Director of reform group Common Cause/NY.

"The League of Women Voters applauds Senator Squadron for introducing this legislation. A single ethics entity with strong enforcement powers over both the Executive and the Legislature is a must if the people of New York are to regain confidence in the integrity of their Government," said Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director for the League of Women Voters.

"Citizens Union supports Senator Squadron introduction of legislation to revamp state's ethics oversight, which Citizens Union and its good government colleagues have continually pushed for in light of recent ethics scandals. New York's current ethics system where the executive and legislative branches effectively police themselves is not only antiquated but, even worse, furthers the perception that officials who act against the public interest will not be held responsible to the fullest extent mandated by the law, if held accountable at all. While Citizens Union is encouraged by the Governor and Legislature's progress on this issue, Citizens Union urges the Legislature to promptly pass this legislation and negotiate a final bill through conference committee that both houses can be comfortable with, and the Governor can expeditiously sign in to law to implement meaningful and much-needed ethics reform," said Dick Dadey, Executive Director for Citizens Union.