



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Aubertine: Ethics, Election Reform a “Critical First Step”

DARREL J. AUBERTINE January 13, 2010

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Senate, Assembly agree on groundbreaking reforms for accountability, open government

WATERTOWN (January 13, 2010)—Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine said today that the historic ethics and election law reform agreement reached today between the Senate and Assembly represents a “critical first step” toward accomplishing the goals he has been pushing for with his colleagues to help clean up Albany and restore the public’s confidence in state government.

“We certainly recognize the problems that exist and the need for tough ethics laws to address these issues and restore the people’s faith in our government,” Sen. Aubertine said. “These are the changes I’ve pushed for along with colleagues from both parties, good government groups and editorial boards in my district and across the state. This agreement between the Senate and Assembly is a first critical step toward accomplishing our goals of creating jobs, controlling spending and providing meaningful property tax relief.”

This reform package far surpasses anything previously passed by the state legislature, making all public officials and entities fully accountable to the people they represent, and giving New York a government as good as its people.

Sen. Aubertine and members of his conference have advocated for reform since before taking the majority last January and over the past year he and his colleagues have passed historic Senate rules reform and public authorities reform, while continuing to press for meaningful reforms to ethics and election law. In addition, the Senator has also called for reforms in the state budget process that bring down state spending.

The Senate’s agreement creates a Legislative Office of Ethics Investigations with primary responsibility to investigate ethical complaints, and members will not be permitted to serve on the Governing Board. Furthering ethical oversight, the Commission on Public Integrity will now have separate enforcement divisions for legislators and lobbyists, with tougher standards. Public officers who earn income from consulting services will be required to disclose their clients and the services provided, while lobbyists and their clients are required to report compensation over \$1,000 annually paid to public officers or entities where they provide services.

Unprecedented election reforms will leave no room for those who attempt to go around the system, and put an end to years of bureaucracy and partisan bickering that has corrupted the fundamental democratic process. This legislation increases disclosure requirements, stiffens and establishes new penalties for violations, and creates a comprehensive statutory framework for the establishment of an independent office of enforcement counsel and investigation proceedings of campaign finance violations.

“For too long election law has lacked the penalties needed to enforce violations and recent high profile cases have shown how easy it has been to evade weak existing ethics provisions,” Sen. Aubertine said. “This work is a promising start, but it is just a beginning. We will continue working to give New Yorkers a government that works for them, and my efforts will continue as we work to meet the needs of individuals and families across the state by advocating budget reform and property tax relief as part of a sensible economic growth agenda.”