



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo: Senate Ethics Reform a Step in the Right Direction, Still More to Do

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR January 25, 2010

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Press Release

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Legislation Is First Step Towards Restoring Accountability for Public Officials

Queens, NY , January 21, 2010

– **NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.**, today announced that after years of corruption and dysfunction in Albany , the New York State Senate and Assembly took a major step forward in passing ethics reform that ends the era of secrecy and significantly raises the amount of disclosure and accountability for elected officials.

The legislation -- which is the first time both houses of the Legislature passed ethics reform of this scope -- requires a legislator to disclose outside sources of income and business relations with lobbyists. It restores an independent oversight commission, and empowers a bipartisan enforcement unit within the New York State Board of Elections to impose strict adherence to campaign finance laws. This bill, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan

support, is seen as the most significant overhaul of New York's campaign finance laws in 30 years.

Senator Addabbo, who chairs the Senate Elections Committee, said: "Finally, there is meaningful reform in Albany. We've taken a step in the right direction to clean up elections and to restore public confidence in our government, but we could do more. I believe we must address the need for stricter campaign finance rules to bring about real campaign reform."

The essential elements of the Election Law Enforcement Provisions are:

Puts additional oversight at the State Board of Elections and

Increases transparency and accountability for elected officials and candidates for public office.

The bill includes:

- Increased disclosure and public reporting requirement

- New and tougher penalties for campaign finance violations

- An independent Office of Enforcement Counsel at the State

To promote increased enforcement of campaign finance reform laws, the legislation creates an enforcement unit within the New York State Board of Elections (BOE) and mandates that at least 35 percent of the board's annual budget be dedicated to the unit. Additionally, it expands the jurisdiction of the enforcement unit and promotes the independence of the enforcement counsel by making the office a four-year term. The legislation also encourages compliance with campaign finance laws by increasing current penalties, creating new penalties for violations, and requiring greater disclosure and transparency of campaign finance information.

The legislation would:

Require three of the four BOE commissioners to vote to stop an investigation by the enforcement counsel, rather than requiring, as current law does, three votes to begin an investigation;

Mandate that all votes to stop an investigation or to act on the recommendation of the enforcement counsel after an investigation occur in public;

Add an additional campaign finance filing for candidates and political committees during the legislative session and increase the penalty for failure to file from \$500 to \$1,000;

Create a substantial penalty of up to \$10,000 for the failure to file required statements three or more times in an election cycle;

Create a new penalty for accepting an excess contribution. In addition to returning the excess, a candidate or committee could be fined an amount equal to two times the excess plus a civil penalty up to \$10,000;

Define and require independent expenditures to identify the source of a political communication and penalize violators up to \$1,000 or the cost of the independent

expenditure, whichever is greater;

Mandate that independent expenditures on communications opposing or supporting a candidate in excess of \$1,000 be subject to the same filing requirements currently in place for candidates and political committees;

Prohibit a person, campaign committee or political party from falsely identifying the source of a political communication; and

Require itemization of candidate and political committee credit card payments and other like payments.

Notes Addabbo, "I eagerly look forward to continuing the progress being made on the long overdue need for reform in Albany. My next step is to start the discussion and process for reforming New York 's campaign finance system and expanding the transparency and accountability of our state government."