



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Governor Cuomo and Legislative Leaders Appoint Members to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics

STEPHEN M. SALAND December 13, 2011

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Independent Commission Has Broad New Enforcement Powers to Investigate Legislative and Executive Branches

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and legislative leaders today announced their appointments to the new Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE). JCOPE is an independent enforcement unit with broad oversight of New York State government. The Commission has robust enforcement powers to investigate violations of law and financial disclosure requirements for all elected officials and their employees in both the executive and legislative branches. JCOPE also has expanded powers to oversee lobbyists due to newly expanded disclosure rules and a broader definition of lobbying.

"The Joint Commission on Public Ethics is an independent monitor that will aggressively investigate corruption and help maintain integrity in state government," Governor Cuomo said. "I am confident that under the leadership of Chair DiFiore and the other board members, the Commission will be the toughest ethics enforcer in our state's history."

Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said, "Today's creation of the Joint Commission on Public Ethics is another step forward in restoring the public's trust in state government.

While the vast majority of people enter public service for all the right reasons, this bipartisan commission will ensure that every legislator continues to be accountable to the people they work for. I am confident that former Senator Rath, Justice Covello and George Weismann will do outstanding work alongside Chairwoman DiFiore and the other representatives of this commission."

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said, "Pat Bulgaro, Marvin Jacob and Ellen Yaroshefsky are accomplished and principled and have distinguished themselves among their peers as individuals who uphold the highest standards of probity, a quality that qualifies them to serve on the Joint Commission on Public Ethics."

Senate Minority Leader John Sampson said, "The appointment of this commission is an important step in the process to restore the public's faith, trust and confidence in our state government. This commission will help clean up Albany and give New Yorkers the more accountable and responsible state government they deserve. I salute Governor Cuomo for his leadership and perseverance in the fight for true ethics reforms. I am confident that that my appointment, Mr. Ravi Batra, will help bring integrity back to the halls of our Capitol."

Assembly Minority Leader Brian M. Kolb said, "New Yorkers deserve a state government that has the highest ethical standards and strongest commitment to public integrity in our nation. With over 15 years of legal experience, including serving in the Jefferson County District Attorney and Public Defender's Offices, and as an attorney in private practice, David Renzi is highly qualified and capable of serving as our Assembly Minority Conference's appointment to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. I look forward to continuing to work with Governor Cuomo, my fellow Legislative Leaders, and all legislators to realize the goal of our state government continually earning the trust of all New Yorkers who we have the privilege of serving."

The bipartisan Commission consists of six members appointed by the Governor, at least three of whom must be enrolled members of the major political party that is not that of the Governor. It also consists of eight members appointed by the legislative leaders. The Senate Majority Leader and the Speaker of the Assembly each appoint three members and the minority leaders of both houses each appoint one member. The Governor appoints the chair from among the Commission members.

Governor Cuomo's appointments are:

· Janet DiFiore, Chair. Elected in 2005 and reelected in 2009, District Attorney DiFiore is the chief law enforcement officer of Westchester County. She also serves as the president of the District Attorney's Association of the State of New York. Prior to her current position, she served as a Judge of the Westchester County Court and as a Justice of the New York State Supreme Court. District Attorney DiFiore was also appointed by former-Chief Judge Judith Kaye to serve as the Supervising Judge for the Criminal Courts in the 9th Judicial District and was appointed by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman to serve as Co-Chair of the New York State Justice Task Force. District Attorney DiFiore received her J.D. from St. John's University School of Law and her B.A. from C.W. Post College, Long Island University.

· Vincent A. DeIorio. Mr. DeIorio is the Chair of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Board of Directors. He is an attorney with private practices in Purchase and New York City. Mr. DeIorio has previously served on the New York State Court of Claims. Mr. DeIorio is a graduate of the Utica College of Syracuse University and the University at Buffalo Law School. Mr. DeIorio will resign from NYSERDA in order to serve on JCOPE.

· Mitra Hormozi. Ms. Hormozi has served as the Chairperson of the New York State Commission on Public Integrity since her appointment earlier this year. Ms. Hormozi is a

partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP. She previously served as the Special Deputy Chief of Staff in the New York Attorney General's Office, where she supervised high-profile initiatives involving public integrity. Prior to that, she spent more than six years as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, where she was the Chief of the Organized Crime and Racketeering Section and received numerous top law enforcement awards. Ms. Hormozi is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the New York University School of Law. Ms. Hormozi will join JCOPE on January 5, 2012, one year after she left the Attorney General's Office.

· Daniel J. Horwitz. Mr. Horwitz is currently a partner at Lanker & Carragher, LLP. He previously served as a New York County Assistant District Attorney in the Frauds Bureau. Prior to his legal career, Mr. Horwitz served as Legislative Director to Congressman Thomas J. Downey. Mr. Horwitz received his J.D. cum laude from the American University Washington College of Law and his B.A. from Columbia University.

· Gary J. Lavine. Mr. Lavine is associated as counsel with Green & Seifter, Attorneys, PLLC. Mr. Lavine served in the U.S. Department of Energy as Deputy General Counsel for Environment & Nuclear Programs during the administration of President George W. Bush. He also served as senior vice president and chief legal officer of Niagara Mohawk Holding Inc. Mr. Lavine has served in a number of staff positions with the New York State Legislature, including legislative counsel to the Minority Leader of the Assembly. He received degrees in both business administration and law from Syracuse University.

· Seymour Knox IV. Mr. Knox is the CEO of Knox International, LLC, a New York based private equity firm. For twenty years, Mr. Knox served as Vice President of Corporate Relations for the Buffalo Sabres. Mr. Knox is a graduate of Lake Forest College.

Senate Majority Leader Skelos' appointments are:

· Mary Lou Rath. Ms. Rath represented the 61st district in Western New York from 1993 until her retirement in 2008. She was the first woman to serve in a leadership position in the Senate Majority and had numerous legislative accomplishments throughout her tenure, especially in the areas of health care and Medicaid reform. She has received many awards and honors in recognition of her distinguished public service in the Senate and as a member of the Erie County Legislature.

· Judge Joseph Covello. Judge Covello has more than 30 years of experience in law and justice. Justice Covello stepped down from the New York State Appellate Division in 2011 to return to private practice. He spent 16 years on the bench, authoring many notable opinions. Before his appointment to the Appellate Division, he served as a trial judge in the Supreme Court, Nassau County. Prior to that, he served on the Appellate Term for the Ninth and Tenth Judicial Districts, and as a trial judge in District Court, Nassau County. He spent 16 years in private practice before becoming a judge. Justice Covello is a veteran of the United States Army, and is a graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo and Hofstra University of Law.

· George H. Weissman. Mr. Weissman served as the Managing General Counsel of the New York State Dormitory Authority for nearly a decade and as Assistant Counsel in the Office of the State Comptroller. His previous positions also included working as Program Associate for the state Senate, and Counsel with the New York State Legislative Commission on Critical Transportation Choices. He was formerly Of Counsel with Marsh, Wasserman and Associates, LLP. He received his J.D. from Albany Law School of Union University and a B.A. in Political Science at SUNY Cortland.

Assembly Speaker Silver's appointments are:

· Pat Bulgaro. Mr. Bulgaro has more than twenty-five years of state government experience, serving at the highest levels of several state agencies, including the Department of Taxation and Finance and the Division of the Budget, where he served as director under former Governor Mario Cuomo. He also served as President and Executive Director of the Center for the Disabled and on the New York State Temporary Commission on Lobbying as an appointee of Speaker Silver. During his distinguished career in public service, Mr. Bulgaro was awarded the Governor Charles Evans Hughes Award for "outstanding career achievement."

· Marvin Jacob. Mr. Jacob, a retired attorney, was a partner in the Business and Finance & Restructuring Department of Weil, Gotshal & Manges, where he handled matters before the bankruptcy courts and federal district and appellate courts. He has corporate bankruptcy litigation experience, serving such institutional clients as General Electric Capital Corporation and Credit Suisse First Boston. Mr. Jacob has also served as the Associate Regional Administrator, New York Regional Office, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. In 2010, the Speaker appointed Mr. Jacob to the task force that oversaw the implementation of the Public Authorities Reform Act of 2009.

· Ellen Yaroshefsky. Ms. Yaroshefsky is currently a law professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, co-executive director of the Jacob Burns Ethics Center in the Practice of Law, and a former adjunct professor at Fordham Law School. She is an experienced attorney specializing in defense and civil rights litigation, and is a member of several attorney ethics review organizations, including the American Bar Association's Ethics, Gideon and Professionalism Committee, the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Standards of Attorney Conduct, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Ethics Advisory Committee.

Senate Democratic Leader John L. Sampson's appointment is:

· Ravi Batra. Mr. Batra is an attorney with a private practice. He has served as a professor of business law at Pace University. Mr. Batra has also served as the Chair of the Judicial Independence Committee of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association. He received his J.D. from Fordham University and his bachelor of business administration degree cum laude from Pace University.

Assembly Minority Leader Brian M. Kolb's appointment is:

· David A. Renzi. Mr. Renzi is a partner in the law firm of Brown, Dierdorf and Renzi. He has been with this Watertown firm since 2002. The firm is recognized for their expertise in the areas of real estate, business formation, estate planning, and municipal practice. Previously, Mr. Renzi served as the Public Defender for Jefferson County and successfully prosecuted thousands of criminal cases. Mr. Renzi is a graduate of Syracuse University School of Law.

JCOPE has jurisdiction to investigate and impose penalties on executive branch employees and lobbyists. JCOPE also has jurisdiction to investigate potential violations of law by legislators and legislative employees and, if violations are found, issue findings to the Legislative Ethics Commission, which will have jurisdiction to impose penalties. Any potential violations of federal or state criminal laws will be referred to the appropriate prosecutor for further action.

JCOPE was created as part of Governor Cuomo's historic ethics reform package passed earlier this year to address major inadequacies in the state's ethics system and to restore public trust in government. The Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011 contained some of the most comprehensive ethics enhancements in modern history, including reforms that create unprecedented transparency, require strict disclosure, and increase penalties for ethics violations.