



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

State Doles Out \$600,000 Each Year for Corrupt Albany Politicians' Pensions; Kennedy Pushes Bill to Take Away Disgraced Lawmaker Pensions

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY April 24, 2013

| ISSUE: **CRIME, ETHICS, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, LEGISLATURE**



Since 1999, 20 Albany politicians have resigned or lost elections after run-ins with the law or ethical failures – and that number may climb higher after the recent political scandals.

In total, the state has paid out \$4.3 million in pension costs to 14 of those 20 individuals.

Kennedy: Crooked politicians shouldn't be able to pay their debt to society behind bars while simultaneously being paid by the very society they ripped off. It needs to stop.

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, wants the state to stop doling out taxpayers' dollars to pay for the pensions of corrupt Albany politicians who violate the public's trust by engaging in criminal or unethical activities. Since 1999, 20 elected officials in state government have resigned or lost elections after run-ins with the law or ethical failures – and that number may climb higher to 23 after the recent political scandals that have rocked Albany.

This year alone, the state will spend nearly \$600,000 on pensions for former state politicians who have ended up behind bars or have been pushed out of office after unethical misdeeds. In total, the state has paid out \$4.3 million in pension costs to 14 of the 20 Albany officials who've left office in disgrace since 1999.

Kennedy is pushing for new measures that would revoke state pensions for any elected official – current or former – at the state or local level who violates the duties of their office and commits acts of public corruption or violent crimes.

“These crooked politicians shouldn't be able to pay their debt to society behind bars while simultaneously being paid by the very society they ripped off. It just doesn't make sense,” Kennedy said. “Those who violate the public trust don't deserve a pension regardless of when they were elected. They shouldn't receive a dime from taxpayers, let alone the thousands and thousands of dollars that they're receiving now. The state must approve new measures to require any state or local elected official who is convicted of a crime to forfeit their pension, so that these 'career criminals' no longer have an incentive to do their dirty work on the public dime.

“The \$4.3 million in taxpayer money that has gone to disgraced Albany officials in the last few years could be far better spent on our schools, roads, and on creating jobs in New York,” he added. “We need to send a clear message that in New York State, public corruption will

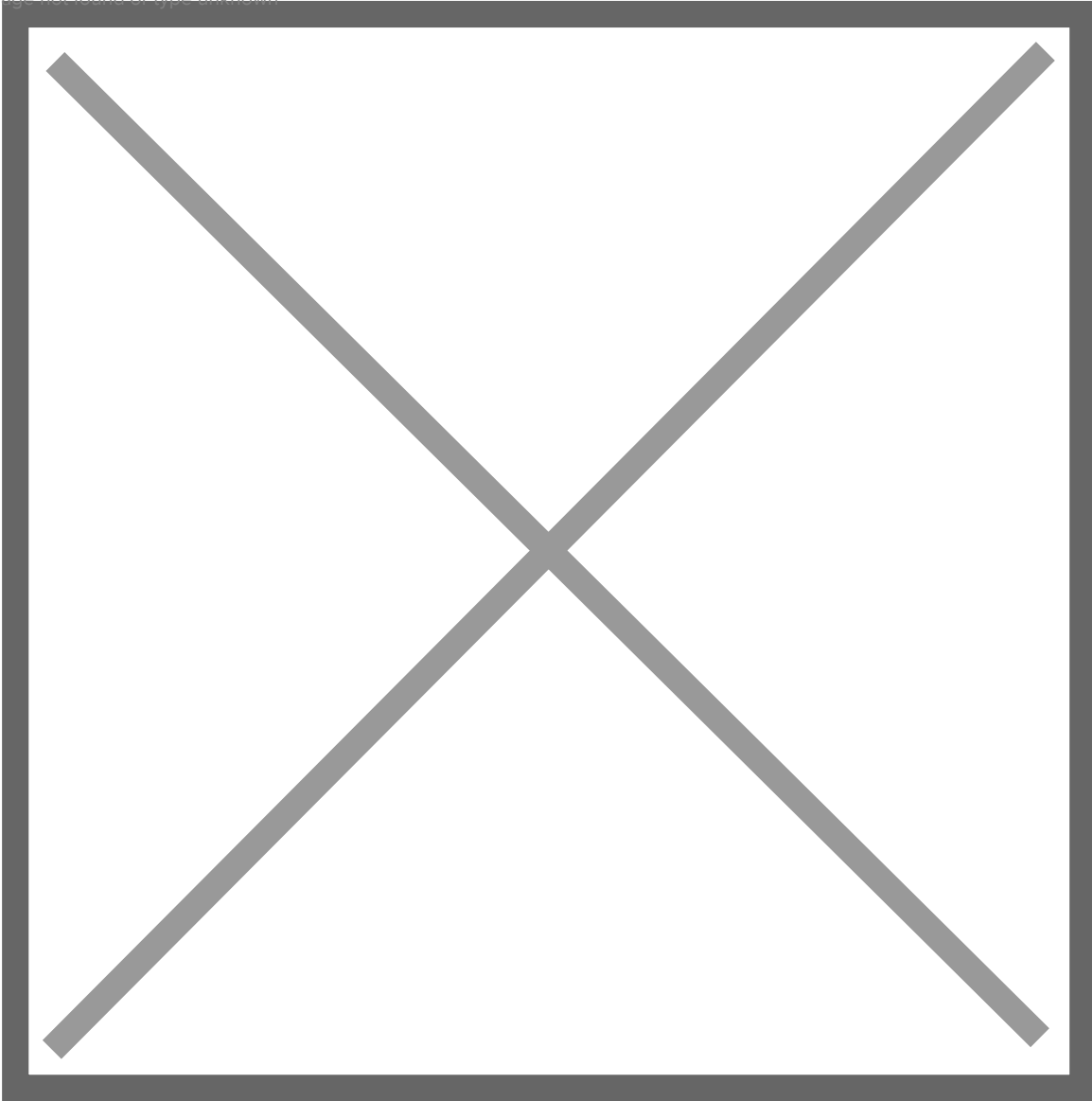
not be tolerated – and it will be punished. It’s time the state puts a stop to future pension payments to those who violate the public trust.”

In a [Siena College poll released Monday](#), over 90 percent of New York voters said public corruption in the State Legislature is a serious problem. Kennedy believes full pension forfeiture is an urgently needed penalty and deterrent to help prevent corruption in the halls of government.

Currently, the state pays \$566,121 each year to 12 elected officials who’ve resigned or lost election amid scandal, according to data accessed through the State Comptroller’s office. The state is still processing retirement calculations for former Senator Shirley Huntley, and the five other individuals (of the 20 who have left office) did not file retirement applications or belong to other retirement systems. Also, two of the 20 former officials passed away in 2011.

After the retirement calculations are completed for Huntley and if the three state officials implicated in the recent corruption scandals apply for retirement, it’s expected that the state’s annual pension costs for corrupt elected officials will climb well above \$600,000.

Image not found or type unknown



Source: NYS Comptroller's Office.

###

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.