



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Senator Valesky Introduces Legislative Reform Package Including Legislation Prohibiting Lobbyists from Engaging in Political Consulting

DAVID J. VALESKY May 6, 2013

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ALBANY—State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) has introduced a package of legislation aimed at preventing corruption.

S. 5009 would prohibit lobbyists from also serving as political consultants. Recent reform to the State’s ethics laws requires elected and appointed individuals to disclose relationships and business interests they may share with those who do business before the state and lobbyists. This same scrutiny has not focused on the potential conflicts of interest that may also arise when a political consultant is hired to help elect or finance a candidate, and then is paid to lobby the same state government official.

“The recent scandals in Albany provide us with an opportunity to examine the way business is done, and to rebuild the public’s trust in their government,” Senator Valesky said. “Building a firewall between political work and public service makes good sense—we can and should avoid this kind of conflict of interest.”

This legislation defines the term “political consultant,” prohibits those who function as political consultants from lobbying or being associated with an organization that is registered to lobby, and requires political campaigns and committees to disclose individuals and organizations that provide political consulting services.

Other bills in the package include:

Ethics in Fundraising (S.2156). Some high profile cases, particularly Bernie Madoff, illustrate the need for transparency and maximum accountability in operations. In order to encourage education in professional responsibility in the field of philanthropy, this legislation provides an incentive in the form of a certificate of ethics course completion from the Attorney General. The course will raise the

consciousness of fundraisers by making them sensitive to the ethical issues they face on a daily basis. In addition, fundraisers would be apprised of the many new state and federal laws pertaining to nonprofits. Universities and colleges statewide and professional trade associations would be permitted to offer the course through classroom training and/or by distance learning.

Campaign Finance Reporting Accountability Act (S.4622). This legislation makes it a Class A misdemeanor to knowingly fail to report donations and expenses for a political campaign committee on three or more occasions within 30 days of the statement being due. Political committees are required by law to report all donations and expenses; unfortunately, there have been many cases where the law has been ignored, with little to no consequence. By making it a criminal offense to neglect to file these disclosure reports, public officials will be held more accountable to their constituents.