



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Next Session Must Address Economic Development, Ethics Reforms

MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER December 19, 2018

Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on December 19th. As one year ends, it's time to look ahead. The start of a new year is right around the corner, and in just a few weeks, we'll be hearing the State of the State, as well as the Executive Budget proposal, from the Governor.

As the 2019-2020 Legislative Session begins, members of the State Legislature must address reforms to ethics and economic development programs. Specifically, two bills that I sponsor

in the State Senate will stop questionable practices from continuing in our state government.

A February 2018 New York Times article profiled a current trend whereby Executive appointees have donated nearly \$900,000 to the Governor's re-election campaign. An atmosphere where appointees operate under the practice of making routine political contributions to the individual appointing them to their positions leads hardworking citizens to believe that Albany is rife with a "pay-to-play" culture.

That is why the Legislature should pass legislation (S8404) to prohibit Executive appointees from making political contributions to the Governor, as well as his or her political campaign, within a year of appointment, during their term, and for a year after the term ends.

Unfortunately, people or businesses with significant public contracts with the state are still allowed to donate substantial campaign contributions. This inappropriate practice gives rise to public suspicion that there may be a relationship between the two occurrences and creates public cynicism and distrust of the process of how public bodies make their decisions.

The Senate and Assembly should pass a new measure (S8409) to prevent the appearance of "pay-to-play" by limiting political donations— from parties applying for grants, licenses, or doing business with public entities— to the public officials or candidates who would approve such grants, licenses or contracts.

I will also be advocating for the passage of major economic development reforms to prevent the misuse of taxpayer dollars, including:

- Protect taxpayer dollars when economic development agreements do not meet expectations;
- Develop a searchable state investment database;
- Create the New York State Procurement Integrity Act; and
- Open an Independent Budget Office.

Lastly, another important step to reform the state's economic development programs is to shutdown the Governor's START-UP NY. This program has failed to produce the job-creating results that were promised. This proposal would stop the state from accepting new applications for the program.

Each one of these reform measures will help ensure taxpayer dollars are invested in effective programs, prevent real or perceived conflicts of interest and enhance transparency in agreements made by state government agencies.

I hope that you and your family have a happy holiday season, and I wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!