



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins Announces Nominees to Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS July 21, 2022

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(Albany, NY) Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins announced today her intention to nominate Seymour W. James, Jr., Esq. and Claudia L. Edwards, Ph.D., to the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government.

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, “I am proud to announce my intention to nominate Seymour W. James Jr., Esq. and Claudia L. Edwards, Ph.D., to the Commission on

Ethics and Lobbying in Government. Mr. James and Dr. Edwards are widely respected individuals with a wealth of experience in their respective fields. I have full confidence that they will serve with the integrity and brilliance they have shown throughout their careers. Mr. James and Dr. Edwards will be great additions to this board and bring their unique insights and experience to promoting public trust in government and improving our state ethics.”

Seymour W. James, Jr., Esq. is a partner with Barket Epstein Kearon Aldea & Lo Turco in New York City. He represents clients in criminal defense proceedings, wrongful conviction matters and civil rights litigation involving police misconduct. He began work in criminal defense in the Legal Aid Society of New York City as a staff attorney in the Kings County Criminal Defense Division in the 1970s, and ascended through the ranks to become Attorney in Chief of the organization in 2014. He has received a myriad of awards for work throughout his career, including the New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Lifetime Achievement Award (2018), New York State Bar Association, Commercial and Federal Litigation Section, Robert L. Haig Award (2017), and the New York Law Journal, Lifetime Achievement Award (2016). In addition, he previously served as President of the New York State Bar Association from 2012-2013.

Dr. Claudia I. Edwards is the President and Founder of Edwards Consulting Group and is recognized as a high performance leader in government, corporate, and not-for-profit sectors with an extensive track record in board development, organizational structure and change. Dr. Edwards was re-appointed for six terms by the Governors of New York—Governor Pataki and Governor Cuomo to serve as a trustee for the Westchester Medical Center (20 years). She was appointed by the County Executive to serve on Westchester County’s Planning Commission (nine years) and the Department of Transportation Board (two years). In addition she served on the advisory committee for Westchester Fund for Women and Girls

(three years). She has been recognized by the New York Times as a distinguished African American in corporate philanthropy and has been awarded several prestigious proclamations and awards.

Created during the 2022 legislative session, the Commission on Ethics in Lobbying and Government (CELG) is New York's new state ethics regulation and enforcement body, succeeding the former Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE). The new commission consists of 11 members appointed by the governor, the leaders of both party conferences in the Senate and Assembly, the Attorney General, and the State Comptroller. Nominees to the Commission must be approved by an Independent Review Committee composed of the deans of New York's 15 American Bar Association accredited law schools. Under the Independent Review Committee's procedure, appointing authorities must publicly announce a prospective nominee and provide an opportunity for the submission of public comment at least seven business days before the nomination is formally submitted. After the formal submission of a nomination, the Independent Review Committee will have up to 30 days to conduct interviews and act on the nomination.