



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

State Senator Liz Krueger Proposes Rules Change to Impose Limits on Accepting Gifts From Lobbyists

LIZ KRUEGER January 25, 2006

Praises Majority Leader Bruno for supporting the idea,
but points out “we don’t have that rule yet”

New York, NY – State Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) commended Majority Leader Joseph Bruno for his recent statements supporting rules banning legislators from accepting gifts from lobbyists, while reminding him that no such rule actually exists. “This proposed rules change is a necessary reform in order to protect the integrity of the legislative process and to restore public confidence in state government,” stated Senator Krueger. “I am pleased to hear that Senator Bruno agrees with me, but he is under the mistaken belief that such a rule already exists. I assume that we can now pass these rules changes with no opposition next week.”

The Senate currently has a standing committee on Ethics, but no specific Senate Rule relating to ethical standards for the acceptance of gifts. New York's ethics laws for legislators are among the weakest in the nation, and they have been so broadly interpreted by the

Legislature that they are almost meaningless. Lobbyists and clients seeking to influence legislators can give them as many gifts as they wish, as long as no single gift is worth more than \$75. And when lawmakers accept a gift valued at more than \$75, they can be found to have broken the law only if it can be proved that gifts were intended to influence or reward them for something they had done. As a practical matter, this loophole renders the law impotent and unenforceable.

Senator Krueger's rule proposal would strictly limit gifts to Senators, officers and employees of the Senate, prohibiting the acceptance of gifts of more than \$25 per year from any lobbyist or their client. This proposed rules change is similar to legislation passed by the Senate in 1999, which failed to become law because it never came to a vote in the Assembly.

"It is clear that lobbyists and their clients should not be giving gifts to lawmakers," remarked Senator Krueger. "Any such attempt to curry favor – at the very least -- gives the wrong impression. This common sense proposal to ban gifts is intended to restore the public's confidence in their elected officials."

Co-sponsors of this proposal include Senators Martin Connor (D-Manhattan & Brooklyn), Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-Bronx), Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Westchester), Eric Schneiderman (D-Bronx), Jose Serrano (D-Harlem), Ada Smith (D-Queens), Malcolm Smith (D-Queens), Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Queens), and David Valesky (D-Syracuse).

