



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Senator Valesky Co-sponsors Senate Ethics Reform Legislation

DAVID J. VALESKY June 2, 2009

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SYRACUSE, N.Y.—State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) will co-sponsor two pieces of legislation that would fundamentally reform governmental ethics in New York State.

“As elected officials, we are and stewards of the citizenry’s interests, and must be held to the highest of standards,” Senator Valesky, Vice President Pro-Tempore of the Senate, said. “The Senate is serious about ethics reform, and I am proud to co-sponsor this legislation, which is part of a seismic shift in the way the people’s business is conducted in Albany.”

The first bill, which was introduced in the Senate yesterday, would create an independent Commission on Governmental Ethics. Unlike its predecessors, this nine-member commission would expand its oversight to include both the executive and legislative branches of government.

Currently, two commissions are charge with oversight of governmental ethics. The Commission on Public Integrity oversees the Executive branch and the Legislative Ethics Commission oversees the Legislative branch.

The Commission on Governmental Ethics would merge these two entities, and be comprised of appointees by both the executive and legislative branches, in an effort to increase effectiveness, independence and transparency.

The Commission on Governmental Ethics would follow the national trend of state ethics commissions that oversee both the executive and legislative branches, in addition to overseeing lobbyists and candidates for public office. Its structure would prevent any one individual, elected official or branch of government from having too much control or influence.

The second bill would require lawmakers to more specifically disclose and define their outside business interests. Many legislators and other public officials earn additional income through part-time occupations and other business relationships. While current law requires some form of disclosure, the proposed legislation would require further detail on income and business interests, and would require the relevant ethics commission to perform random audits of filed financial disclosure statements.

By requiring increased disclosure by public officials, potential conflicts of interest or questions about outside business relationships will be brought to light proactively.

The Senate has conducted a series of hearings about ethics reform which includes these pieces of legislation, the latest of which occurred today in Albany.

Senator Daniel Squadron (D-Brooklyn) is lead sponsor of the bills. Both bills are expected to be brought to committee before the end of the legislative session on June 22.

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