



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Bonacic Urges Legislature to Enact Ethics Reform

JOHN J. BONACIC December 11, 2009

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December 11, 2009: State Senator John J. Bonacic has urged that the Legislature enact comprehensive ethics reform when it re-convenes next month. Bonacic is the only Republican State Senator to co-sponsor bi-partisan comprehensive ethics reform legislation (S.5738). That legislation:

- Creates a Commission on Governmental ethics which covers both the Executive and Legislative branches;
- The Commission would consist of nine members appointed by the Governor (3) the Comptroller (1), Attorney General (1), Senate Majority Leader (1), Minority Leader (1), Speaker of the Assembly (1), and Minority Leader of the Assembly (1);
- No appointee could be a lobbyist, or employee of a political consulting firm, or the recipient of a State contract;
- The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission must be members of different political parties.

“The current ethics system does not work. I would prefer a system where either Legislators are not on the ethics commission, or the meetings are otherwise held in public, or both. This legislation is a significant step and one that should be enacted. I am proud to be sponsoring it, and hope more Republicans will join me.”

To date, the legislation has 21 sponsors. Bonacic is the only Republican. It is likely that the legislation, or a similar version, could be voted on in early January in the Senate.

Senator Bonacic also will shortly be introducing legislation to open up public meetings of the Ethics Committee to public scrutiny, something that now does not happen.

In addition to pushing for changes in the State’s ethics laws, Senator Bonacic has helped the Senate take two other steps to shed more light on the State Legislative process.

Those efforts include the first substantial, positive overhaul of Legislative rules in decades. The Rules changes enacted this year, modeled after Bonacic’s report on Rules

Reform, opened up the Legislative process, empowered rank and file members, and created opportunities for all Senators to require legislation to come to a vote on the floor.

In addition, Senator Bonacic is the Senate Republican representative on enhancing New York's Legislative television channel. This year, he helped secure an agreement to start broadcasting Legislative Hearings (which is not typically done,) and has urged that all Committee meetings be broadcast – something the Assembly Democratic Majority has refused to go along with.

Senator Bonacic has long led efforts within the State Senate to bring reform to the Legislature. He was the only Senator to call for the removal of former Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno after it was revealed Bruno was under FBI investigation. He was named to the *Times Union's* "Honor Roll" of reform for voting against the Legislature's decision to secretly hand pick a State Comptroller, and was noted earlier this year by the *New York Daily News* for his efforts in successfully reforming the Senate Rules and the *Times Herald Record* for his ability to work across the aisle in a non-partisan manner.

"I believe by empowering individual members, and opening up the process, you can diminish the ethical problems, because more members will have the ability to make decisions, and a more transparent process will exist," concluded Senator Bonacic.

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