



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Terminate Pensions For Felon Lawmakers

JAMES L. SEWARD April 8, 2013

| ISSUE: **ETHICS**

ONEONTA, 04/08/13 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today announced he is joining in sponsoring legislation to end pension benefits for elected officials convicted of felonies. Senator Seward is also calling for added state funding to assist in the investigation of government corruption.

“Recent arrests and accusations of corruption involving state legislators are indefensible,” said Senator Seward. **“Even more deplorable, the fact that those convicted of felonies are able to live out their lives on the public dole, receiving taxpayer funded pensions. It’s shameful and a practice that must come an end.”**

Senate bill 3048 would add a new section to the state constitution barring any elected official, convicted of a felony offense while in office, from collecting his pension benefits.

Previous legislation has sought to reduce or eliminate benefits of those convicted while in office. However, it is likely such proposals are unconstitutional, therefore, amending the New York State Constitution is necessary.

Along with ending pension benefits for convicted legislators, Senator Seward is also calling for enhanced investigations and additional resources to bring public wrongdoers to justice along with tougher penalties for those convicted of ethics violations.

“The aggressive prosecution and harsher punishment of those who use their office as a steppingstone for criminal activity and personal gain must be a priority. I have supported ethics reforms including new financial disclosure measures that have been signed into law in recent years, but we need to go further.

“This is my twenty-seventh year in the state senate, and I am shocked by this type of criminal activity. While the alleged behavior of those recently arrested is sensational and appalling, it is not typical of the way most elected to state office conduct business. The overwhelming majority of those who serve in Albany are there to represent the interests of their constituents, not feather their own nests. The actions of a select few bring shame on the institution of the legislature and are a black eye for all legislators.

“Public service is a noble calling when performed for the right reasons. We need to take steps to reaffirm the trust and faith people place in their elected officials when they cast their ballot to elect them,” Seward concluded.