

News from Senator George M. Borrello

57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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SENATOR BORRELLO PARTICIPATES IN SENATE'S ETHICS AND INTERNAL GOVERNANCE HEARING IN NEW YORK CITY

Legislators and good government advocates discuss weakness of current system and reform alternatives



NEW YORK CITY – Senator George Borrello, member of the New York State Senate Finance Committee and Ranking Member on the Procurement and Contracts Committee, participated in a public hearing in New York City on the subject of ethics reform in state government.

The hearing, held by the Senate Committee on Ethics and Internal Governance, was aimed at gathering input and ideas for legislation to reform the state's much-criticized ethics enforcement system. The effort has taken on added urgency in the wake of the revelations of corruption and wrongdoing by the prior governor, which came to light over the past year.

“New Yorkers have come face to face with the catastrophic impact that can result when state government’s ethics entities are compromised by a lack of independence and vigor. Our former governor brutally manipulated the levers of state government to his advantage, with the help of a wide network of loyalists installed throughout the system, including at JCOPE, the body charged with oversight and regulation of ethics.

“To that end, today’s hearing was critically important as a step towards examining the shortcomings of our current ethics laws and discussing possible reforms and alternatives. It was disappointing that key state ethics agencies declined to actively participate, including the Attorney General’s office, the Legislative Ethics Commission, the Inspector General, the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations and the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. Not only would their input have been valuable to the discussion, but their absence sends a troubling message about their commitment to critically-need reforms.

“In contrast, the active participation by Comptroller DiNapoli’s office was appreciated and in keeping with the independence and integrity that the Comptroller has brought to that office over the past 15 years. Our discussion highlighted the need to restore full oversight authority to the Comptroller’s office for larger OGS, SUNY and CUNY contracts, a role that was eliminated by our previous governor in one of his many power grabs. As co-sponsor of

[legislation](#) that would restore that authority, I look forward to working with my colleagues to move that forward in the coming session.

“There is unanimous agreement among legislators and good government advocates that New York State needs a truly independent, bi-partisan and robust ethics infrastructure. California Senator and Legislative Ethics Chair Scott Weiner outlined a model that benefits from a strong working partnership between the Democratic Chair and Republican Vice-Chair, a bipartisan foundation which should be a goal of any reforms we implement in New York.

“We have tremendous work to do, to address the failures of our state’s ethics laws and regulatory entities. I would like to thank my colleagues and all those who participated in this critically important hearing. It is time for us to get this right, for the good of our state and the New Yorkers we serve.”

Participants in today’s hearing included: Nelson Sheingold, counsel to the State Comptroller DiNapoli and Terri Crowley, executive deputy comptroller for operations; Rachel Fauss, senior analyst for Reinvent Albany; Blair Horner, executive director of the New York State Public Interest Research Group; Ben Weinberg, policy director of the Citizens Union; California Senator Scott Weiner, chair of the Senate Legislative Ethics Committee and Erin Peth, chief counsel to the Committee; and Robert Tembeckjian, administrator and counsel, New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct.

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