



IN THIS UPDATE, READ ABOUT:

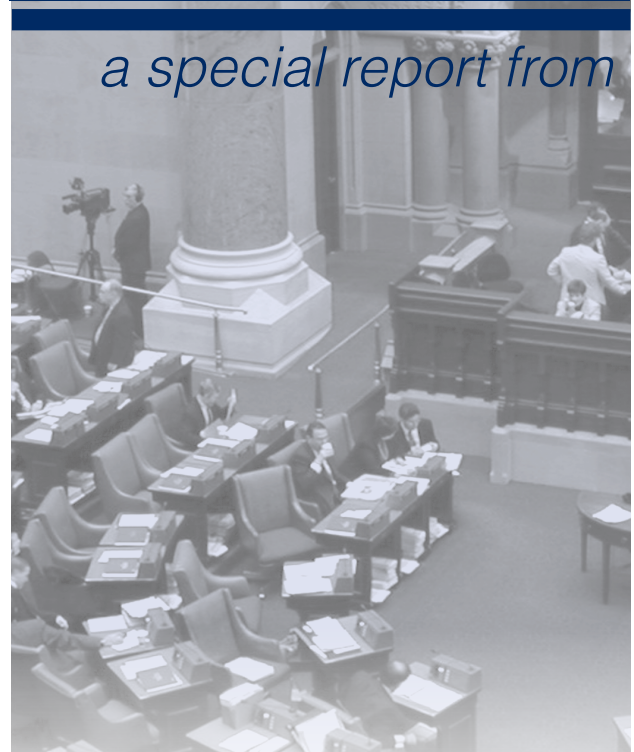
- Taxpayer-funded political campaigns
- Real solutions to enact ethics reform



a special report from
Assemblyman
WILL BARCLAY



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TAX DOLLARS FOR CAMPAIGNS

Ethics reform has been the buzz phrase in Albany for good reason. Several high profile cases of misconduct have highlighted the need to address corruption. The Governor and others have used this rhetoric to propel their agenda to enact publicly financed campaigns.



This push led to public financing for the State Comptroller's race in this year's budget. Under this plan, up to \$175 in private contributions will be matched \$6 to \$1 with taxpayer dollars.

Taxpayer money should not be used to support candidates running for election. Think about it. Would you vote for a candidate that you disagree with? Probably not, but with publicly financed campaigns your tax dollars could go to support them.

Another concern is with the cost. If enacted statewide, it is estimated the cost could be up to \$100 million. This money could be put to better use and would be better in the hands of taxpayers.

Lastly, subsidizing campaigns with taxpayer dollars will not magically create more ethical legislators. It is unclear how public financing will prevent sexual harassment, member item abuse or bribery—all the scandals of late. Further, modeling it off of the system in New York City, a hotbed of political corruption, is senseless. The best way to clean up corruption? Enact real ethics reform.

REAL ETHICS REFORM

Currently, the Speaker of the Assembly and his staff unilaterally decide how complaints are handled. Sometimes cases have been referred to the Ethics Committee while other times, they have been ignored or covered up with cash settlements without public knowledge. I introduced legislation establishing an independent ethics committee for the Assembly, consisting of eight members—four from the Majority and four from the Minority. All ethics complaints made against an Assembly member or a staff member would be referred to this committee, which would have the power to investigate the claim or defer the complaint to another appropriate investigative entity. The committee would also be able to impose various penalties or, in certain cases, recommend penalties be imposed by vote of the full Assembly.



I am also proposing a constitutional amendment that calls for the automatic forfeiture of state pensions for lawmakers convicted of a felony while in office. Those convicted of corruption should not have this taxpayer-funded perk and we need to fix that immediately.

In addition to my ethics legislation, I sponsor the Public Officers' Accountability Act. Some of the reform measures in the bill are:

- ***Bar any elected official who commits a felony related to their duties from holding public employment in the future***
- ***Reform member items***
- ***Create a new crime against the public trust***
- ***Limit the use of campaign funds to campaign-related activities***
- ***Introduce an eight-year term limit for legislative leaders***

For questions on this or any state matter, contact Assemblyman Barclay at:

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