



House of Representatives

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

Memorandum

Date: January 24, 2011

To: All House Members

From: Curt Schroder, Member 155th Legislative District *CS*
Mike Vereb, Member 150th Legislative District *MV*
Eugene DePasquale, Member 95th Legislative District *ED*
Josh Shapiro, Member 153rd Legislative District *JS*

RE: Co-sponsorship of Legislation - Pennsylvania Public Integrity Commission Act

In the near future we plan to re-introduce legislation to create a Public Integrity Commission. All of us are aware, over the last few years, of the numerous allegations, ongoing court cases and convictions related to public corruption in the Commonwealth. These corruption cases have involved both local and state officials and have touched on the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government. All of us work under the shadow of this corruption and experience the impact on the public's perception of its government.

To address and prevent corruption, we believe that the public would be best served by a statewide law enforcement entity which focuses on investigating criminal incidents of public corruption. In the near future, we intend to introduce legislation to create the Pennsylvania Public Integrity Commission. Its mission would be to:

- Uncover and investigate public corruption at all levels and in all branches of government within the Commonwealth. Investigations would be referred to appropriate law enforcement officials for prosecution.
- Serve both a law enforcement and educational role with respect to corruption in Pennsylvania.
- Work cooperatively with other law enforcement entities, including the Pennsylvania Attorney General.
- Issue reports on its work, the status of corruption and recommendations for reform.

The Public Integrity Commission would have subpoena power and the authority to seek immunity orders to obtain testimony necessary in public corruption investigations. This ensures it has maximum ability to carry out investigations.

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In addition to the expanded authority and law enforcement status, the Public Integrity Commission would absorb the existing functions and duties of the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission related to statements of financial interest and conflicts of interest.

Knowing of the fiscal restraints in our Commonwealth this year, we have found a funding mechanism that WILL NOT impact the general fund budget. In addition to two funding streams already contained in the legislation, we propose to redirect money from the surcharge imposed on court filings by Act 49 of 2009. This surcharge will sunset in January, 2012 and we intend to extend its life and dedicate a percentage of the funding to the PIC.

It is our hope that this new, empowered agency will take Pennsylvania out from under the dark cloud of suspicion hovering over many of our governmental institutions and into the light of good, ethical government practices. Self policing has not worked. It is time to form an independent state agency to root out and prevent public corruption.

If you are interested in cosponsoring this legislation, please contact Rep. Schroder's Office by calling 783-2520 or e-mail Carolyn May at cmay@pahousegop.com.

CS/cjm