

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 18, 2012
TO: All House Members
FROM: Representative Babette Josephs
SUBJECT: Co-sponsor Request - Investing in Pennsylvania Ethics Commission

There has been recent interest in replacing the Pennsylvania Ethics Commission with a new entity to be called the Public Integrity Commission – a reincarnation of the Pennsylvania Crime Commission, but this time with greater powers and a \$4 to \$5 million price tag.

I believe that we should instead invest in the proven Pennsylvania Ethics Commission (PEC), giving it the responsibility and the capacity to do what the Public Integrity Commission would do, but without confusing the public by putting up yet another, more bureaucratic, agency. We should take full advantage of the PEC's proven expertise by allowing it to do more of what it already does very well without inflicting a heavy price tag on the taxpayer.

The Ethics Commission for 33 years has been integral to investigations, expositions and prosecutions of the many scandals that have plagued the Commonwealth. In recent years – it worked on Bonusgate, Computergate, the Philadelphia Housing Authority mess, the non-judicial beginnings of the Cash for Kids disaster in Luzerne County, and much more. Over the years, the Ethics Commission has investigated and prosecuted thousands of matters whose successful completions have removed tainted public officials from office and restored millions of dollars to Pennsylvania's treasury.

I will introduce a package of three bills aimed at strengthening the Ethics Commission, by:

- Requiring financial disclosure from all public officials and public employees at every level of government, barring the judiciary, allowing the Commission to uncover, investigate and prosecute public corruption within the Commonwealth, and to restore public trust in government by pursuing attempts to realize, or actual realizations of, personal financial gain by persons either seeking or holding public office;
- Exacting the penalty of public pension forfeiture upon conviction for criminal offenses relating to conflict of interest, improper influence, improper gifts and honoraria; and
- Allowing the Commission to use the 'access to confidential information' statute (42 P.S. 8721) to acquire the information it is currently unable to access.

If you wish to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Jenn Belz at 787-8529 or at jbelz@pahouse.net.