

8/3/2016

Sheila Birnbaum
Chair
NYS Commission on Legislative, Judicial and Executive Compensation
64 Beaver Street, Box 454
New York, NY 10004

Dear Ms. Birnbaum,

I write to express my deep concerns with plans to give legislators a pay raise before they have taken any meaningful steps toward real ethics and campaign finance reform. Over the years, the New York State Legislature has drawn national attention with one member after the next convicted of corruption and monetizing their offices. And yet, no meaningful steps have been taken to stop the epidemic of political corruption in Albany. Additionally, many current legislators, including State Senator George Amedore, treat public service as a part-time hobby, and they continue to earn substantial amounts of money from their outside employment. All of these facts lead to one inescapable conclusion, no legislative pay increase should be considered until meaningful ethics reform is passed, including closure of the LLC campaign finance loophole and limiting outside income.

When faced with overwhelming calls from the public to pass meaningful ethics reform, Senator Amedore and the Senate Republicans have refused to take steps to change the culture of corruption in Albany. One of the tasks for your panel is to determine if legislators, who currently earn \$79,500 annually, plus additional money for travel, food expenses and lodging, deserve a pay raise. Given their repeated refusal to address corruption, the answer to whether legislators deserve a pay hike is a resounding no.

Community members throughout New York find it offensive that legislators like George Amedore, who have blocked ethics reforms and treat their public service as a hobby rather than a full-time job, would try to give themselves a pay hike. That is why I urge you all to send a clear message that you understand legislative pay raises must be earned, and the State Legislature simply hasn't done enough to warrant one. Tell the State Legislature that meaningful ethics reform must be passed before these elected officials should even consider a pay increase funded by the taxpayers of New York State.

Sincerely,

Sara Niccoli

CC:
Hon. Barry A. Cozier (Ret.)

Roman B. Hedges
Mitra Hormozi
Gary Johnson
Hon. James J. Lack (Ret.)
Fran Reiter