

Subject line: Watchdogs urge governor and legislature to create a new, independent state ethics commission in this budget

For Immediate Release

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Watchdogs Urge Gov. Hochul and Legislative Leaders to Create an Independent State Ethics Commission in this Budget

Groups back Governor Hochul's basic "framework" of law school deans appointing ethics commissioners *if* there is a transparent selection process and specific measures increasing independence

Citing "New York State government's significant and ongoing problem with conflicts of interest, the abuse of power and corruption," prominent legal experts and watchdog groups [wrote the governor and legislative leaders yesterday](#) and urged them to create a "new, independent ethics commission."

Groups and individuals signing the letter include: Reinvent Albany (John Kaehny), Citizens Union (Betsy Gotbaum), Committee to Reform the State Constitution (Evan Davis), Common Cause/NY (Susan Lerner), League of Women Voters of New York State (Laura Ladd Bierman), New York City Bar Association-Committee on Government Ethics and State Affairs (Edward Murray), New York Public Interest Research Group (Blair Horner) and the Sexual Harassment Working Group (Erica Vladimer).

According to the groups:

"The Governor's proposal is easy to understand, realistic, and creates a smaller commission with simple majority voting rules. Plus, the Governor proposes subjecting the new ethics commission to the Freedom of Information Law and Open Meetings Law."

The groups say the Joint Commission on Public Ethics "is not designed for – nor capable – of enforcing laws fairly and effectively. JCOPE must be replaced by an independent ethics commission." The letter also says:

"Barely a year goes by without an enormous scandal in Albany. Before the sexual harassment, book deal and COVID-19 nursing home death investigations erupted around the former governor, there was the Buffalo Billion bid-rigging corruption, and, before that the Speaker of the Assembly, Attorney General, Senate Leader and various legislators were engulfed in unethical behavior."

The groups provide highly specific recommendations in six areas that will increase the transparency, independence and effectiveness of the new ethics body.

The letter includes detailed recommendations in six areas:

1. Transparent Selection Process
2. Increased Independence and Effectiveness
3. Budget and Resources
4. Expanding the State Ethics Code
5. Transparency of Ethics Commission Operations
6. Improved Lobbying and Financial Disclosure Reports

A PDF of the letter is available [here](#).

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