



ILLINOIS REFORM COMMISSION

Thursday, April 13, 2009

Enforcement Comments from Website and Other Sources

As of Monday, April 6, the Illinois Reform Commission has received 1230 comments, through www.reformillinoisnow.org. We have also received 278 comments via fax, phone, and regular mail. Approximately 16% of the substantive comments we have received touch on enforcement issues reform. These comments expressed frustration with wrongdoers who escape prosecution or face light sentencing and favor the protection of whistleblowers.

Most commenters focused on the need for enhanced penalties and enforcement:

“I would like to see a new Illinois law holding public officials responsible for the cost to taxpayers of illegal activity.” —Chicago, 01/09/2009

“Right now a person that embezzles from a company receives a much harder sentence than an elected official for corruption. The consequences must be a deterrent.” —Carol Stream, 01/19/2009

“When a business person is pressed into pay for play, he should be legally obligated to report this to the authorities. If it is not reported and then subsequently discovered, the businessman should be prosecuted for the crime, the same as the politician.” —Oswego, 01/24/2009

Some commenters had specific suggestions of possible penalties:

“Pass legislation that acts as a strong deterrent to public servant crime or ethics violations. This would include immediate and permanent loss of all benefits and pension, mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years in prison with additional time to be determined by a jury trial based on nature of the crime, and compensation for all money due the taxpayers of Illinois.” —Aurora, 01/06/2009

“The punishment for bribing (or whatever verb works legally) of a public official should be the confiscation of all properties that could be involved in the bribe or that were acquired as a result of the bribe.” —West Chicago, 01/30/2009

“All elected officials and law enforcement employees of Illinois should be required to sign a voluntary agreement to be subject to higher penalties when found guilty of violations of the laws governing their conduct in their employment by the citizens of Illinois. I suggest that such penalty be set at twice the maximum penalty currently established for that crime.” —Chicago Heights, 01/23/2009

“Corruption should be a treasonable offence. Very long prison sentences should be imposed WITHOUT the benefit of pardon except by a special vote by the people only.” —Summit, 01/26/2009

Other commenters suggested new enforcement mechanisms:

“Set up an outside entity to go into each agency and review all hiring and promotion practices over the last 10 years.” —Springfield, 01/29/2009

“The only solution is a truth commission. Like in South Africa if people are given immunity for confessing fully their involvement in fraud, patronage, corruption, back-room dealings, etc., then fear of losing a job, not getting a promotion, or retaliation will be eliminated.” —Berkeley, 02/01/2009

“Have one of the Big 4 Audit conduct independent audits of all Committees and Departments within the State of IL. Then post the results of the audits, from the audit reports, online for the Citizens of IL to review along with the steps the Committees, Departments, and the Governor are taking to resolve their findings in compliance and assurance” —Chicago, 02/06/2009

Many commenters suggested ways to increase beneficial whistleblowing:

“I also think that having local public awareness meetings will help taxpayers learn how to be ‘whistleblowers’ when they are aware of someone in their own neighborhood trying to buy their way into a government contract.” —Crest Hill, 01/07/2009

“A ‘whistle blower’ line would also help a lot and point the auditor in the right direction.” —Chicago, 02/06/2009

“Create an Anonymous submission site where people can report unethical behavior that should be investigated. Most times, this goes unreported because people are afraid of the backlash and repercussions from exposing those in power. If people feel like they can report these things without fear of reprisal, perhaps more behaviors will be reported, and a committee can keep track and research ones that seem to be viable.” —Urbana, 02/02/2009

Others focused on the need to protect state employees and citizens who report wrongdoing:

“A whistle blower needs to know for sure his/her job is protected, not just a promise; a contract that if the ethics complaint is proven, the state will always be obligated to keep the employee safe from job loss. The current system is worthless and everyone knows they will likely eventually loss their job, by turning in their complaint.” —Moweaqua, 01/17/2009

“I strongly suggest that we have protection for individuals that demonstrate the courage to be a whistle blower. Whistle blowers should be encouraged and rewarded and not punished for demonstrating courage to do what is just and right.” —Chadwick, 01/30/2009

Commenters also made specific comments about existing investigation and enforcement mechanisms, e.g. the Office of the Inspector General:

“There is need for substantive reform in the Office of the Inspector General. There are duplicative functions with the Auditor General, reports are not made public, and the interest of privacy continually trumps the interest of transparency.” —Chicago, 02/26/2009

“I believe many State employees do not trust the Office of the Inspector General or their Labor Relation offices.” —Springfield, 01/07/2009

“Change the reporting structure of the Inspector Generals Office. Instead of reporting directly to the Governor, this position should report to the Legislature so they can maintain independence such as the Auditor General's Office does.” —Springfield, 01/17/2009

“Local Inspector Generals Offices are created and charged with the detection, reduction and prosecution of fraud, waste and abuse, but, at the present, statutes do not allow for sharing of information between jurisdictions or the easy conduct of joint investigations.” —Chicago, 02/04/2009

“Make the Illinois Attorney General more accountable for going after state corruption.” —Chicago, 01/31/2009