

Wehrli, Bipartisan Group of Legislators Call for Ethics Reform

October 28 2019 2:21 PM



SPRINGFIELD – Amidst ongoing public corruption investigations entangling multiple layers of Illinois government, Assistant House Minority Leader Grant Wehrli (R-Naperville) and a group of lawmakers is renewing the call for comprehensive ethics reform. At a press conference this morning, the lawmakers said the General Assembly must take swift action to not only enhance Illinois' current public ethics laws, but also called for the creation of a new task force.

“When the penalty for a litany of serious ethical violations is no more than a misdemeanor, it’s no wonder our statutes are failing to deter corrupt behavior,” said Wehrli. “Now the FBI is executing search warrants across almost every level of government, and officials who hold influential positions are at the center of several investigations. There can be no more excuses for inaction.

“Releasing House Bill 361 from the rules committee and giving it a fair hearing needs to be the first step in this process. If the General Assembly can’t take some basic action to rein in our own bad actors, then the notion of this body acting in the best interests of the people of Illinois is a farce.”

As a first step in the process to restoring public trust, HB 361 dramatically increases the fines legislators face for engaging in numerous restricted activities and for violations of legislator rules of conduct. Wehrli also noted several other pieces of ethics reform legislation that has been filed in recent years, but never received full consideration by the General Assembly.

In addition, the lawmakers called for the adoption of House Joint Resolution 87 to create the State Ethics Task Force. Filed for creation last week by State Representative Tony McCombie (R-Savanna), the task force will be charged with identifying areas of concern, reviewing current laws, studying best practices and proposing additional legislative solutions to ensure Illinois is holding public officials accountable for their actions.

“There are too many lapses to ignore. Structural deficiencies require the General Assembly to take action together on behalf of those we serve,” said McCombie. “To not move this resolution forward is to embrace the status quo. We must begin the process of restoring the public’s trust by passing this resolution before the end of veto session.”

The task force will consist of nine members: a member of the Governor’s staff or the Lt. Governor, along with two legislative members appointed by each of the four caucus leaders. Once formed, the task force must accomplish its work in ninety days, with findings and a final report recommending legislative changes then to be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly for action.

The other legislators who participated in the press conference included State Representatives Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro), Mark Batinick (R- Plainfield), Margo McDermed (R-Mokena) and Maurice A. West, II (D-Rockford), as well as State Senator Sue Rezin (R- Peru).