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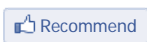


Rep. Diehl joins Republican caucus

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Posted Jul 05, 2011 @ 03:01 PM



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Abington — Led by House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones Jr., R-North Reading, and Rep. Dan Winslow, R-Norfolk, Rep. Geoff Diehl, R-Whitman, joined his Republican colleagues in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in proposing the first comprehensive reform of the House Code of Ethical Conduct governing Representatives and legislative staff in more than 25 years. The proposed reforms will hold members and legislative staff to a higher standard of ethical conduct than prescribed by statute, as well as work to restore the public's faith in state government.

"This initiative boils down to one word – 'trust.' People of my district and across the Commonwealth deserve nothing less than representation by

government officials who are working for the best interests of their constituents," said Diehl. "Nothing of worth on Beacon Hill can be accomplished if we don't carry the trust of the people who put us here."

Announced by the House Republican Caucus recently, the formal proposal will be filed and debated at the next formal session of the House. House Republicans invite all Democrats to join the proposed reform as co-sponsors.

"The citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts deserve a legislative body that maintains the highest ethical standards," said Jones. "It is our duty to strengthen and update the House Code of Ethical Conduct in order to ensure public trust, respect and confidence in state government."

"Even though the House Republicans are initiating new ethics reform for our members, we strongly believe this should be a bipartisan effort to toughen and update the House Code of Ethical Conduct. A new code of conduct will assure that House Members and staff are held accountable to the people we serve," said Winslow, lead author and co-sponsor of the proposed legislation.

Highlights of the proposed Code of Ethical Conduct include:

Procurement: Forbids members and staff from contacting public entities regarding pending procurements before the award decision is made. Legislators have no constitutional role regarding procurement after voting on appropriation;

Job recommendations: Limits members and staff to written recommendations for job seekers in the public sector, unless the employer initiates contact to check references;

Snitch rule: Creates ethical duty for members and staff to report any unethical or criminal conduct by any other members or staff;

Sexual harassment and discrimination: Treats sexual harassment and discrimination based on gender, age, sexual orientation, etc. as an ethical issue in addition to an employment issue;

Lobbyists: Prohibits lobbyists from entering the House Chamber and the Members' Lounge, and limits lobbyist access to members and staff unless displaying a publicly visible badge identifying them as lobbyists;

Arrest or indictment: Creates detailed disclosure requirements in the event a member or staff is arrested, indicted or charged with criminal offenses, or named as a defendant in a domestic violence restraining order, and empowers the Ethics Committee to act immediately as appropriate; and

Private life/privacy: Preserves the right of members and staff to have private lives, provided that private conduct does not become public or otherwise bring the House into public disrepute. Confirms that member and staff families are beyond the scope of the legislative ethical code.

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