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Legislators say DiMasi conviction closes book on corruption

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Former Massachusetts House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi makes a statement Wednesday outside the federal courthouse in Boston after his conviction on conspiracy and other charges.

Is this article accurate?

By Nancy Reardon Stewart
Patriot Ledger State House Bureau
Posted Jun 16, 2011 @ 09:02 AM



BOSTON — Many local lawmakers said the conviction of former Speaker Salvatore DiMasi closes the corruption chapter on Beacon Hill. Some said it shows what happens when one party rules. All said they were angry and disappointed it happened.

Legislators received the news of DiMasi's guilty verdict just as they were due in the House chamber Wednesday for their annual "class" photo and a formal session. Many reacted slowly, stepping out to talk to reporters between votes later in the afternoon.

DiMasi is the third consecutive Massachusetts House speaker to be found guilty on federal charges.

Lawmakers were quick to distance the current House from the one led by DiMasi.

"What this verdict means is that an individual broke the law," said state Rep. Thomas Calter, D-Kingston. "He was found guilty and justice is now being served as it should be."

On the other side of the aisle, state Rep. Geoff Diehl, R-Whitman, said, "I hope people can look beyond the immediate case and see there's 25 percent turnover in the Legislature" from the last election.

Diehl, just elected in November, campaigned against so-called Beacon Hill insiders he said were detached from voters.

Six months into the job, he said he doesn't see a corrupt group of lawmakers.

Diehl and other lawmakers took issue with statements earlier in the day by U.S. Attorney Carmen Ortiz, who said the DiMasi verdict deals another blow to the "culture of corruption" at the State House.

"To say there's a culture of corruption diminishes the work being done by so many outstanding public servants," Calter said.

"It's not fair," said state Rep. James Cantwell, D-Marshfield. "It's disappointing that we've had these high-profile convictions. In this case, it is betrayal of the public trust and clearly there should be punishment."

While current House Speaker Robert DeLeo said it's time to move on and focus on restoring people's trust in government, Republican leaders said the Legislature could use more reforms to prevent corruption and described the

DiMasi verdict as the result of Democrats being too powerful.

"This is another example of the continuing problems that we can lay at the doorstep of one-party politics," said House Minority

Poll

Do you think the conviction of former House speaker Salvatore DiMasi ends the culture of corruption on Beacon Hill?

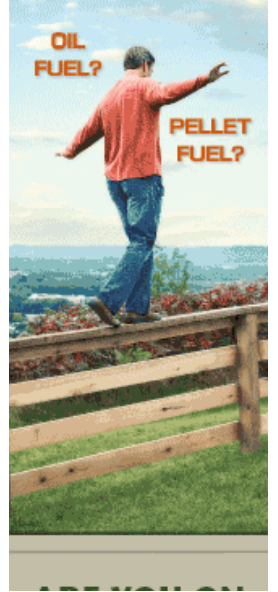
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Leader Bradley Jones, R-North Reading.


State Sen. Robert Hedlund, R-Weymouth, had the same reaction.

"I've seen, over my tenure here, more power concentrated in the hands of presiding officers in both branches," Hedlund said. "When you have that type of power vested in the speaker, you're going to see this type of behavior."

Nancy Reardon Stewart may be reached at nstewart@ledger.com.

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