

GOVERNOR PATRICK ANNOUNCES ETHICS & LOBBYING REFORM INITIATIVES

Moves to strengthen rules and restore public confidence

BOSTON- Friday, October 31, 2008 - Governor Deval Patrick announced today actions aimed at reforming the Commonwealth's ethics and lobbying rules.

Specifically, the Governor intends to file comprehensive ethics and lobbying reform legislation developed with the advice of a new bi-partisan task force convened by his Chief Legal Counsel and former federal prosecutor Ben Clements. In addition, the Governor will re-file and expand upon legislation that refocuses state government on matters of broader importance by giving local communities more autonomy over local affairs.

"In a successful democracy, the currency of government is not money. It's integrity," said Governor Patrick. "We in public office are not entitled to our positions. We are placed here by voters to do the best we can on their behalf. And we are expected to conduct their business honestly and openly."

Actions announced today include:

Task Force on Ethics and Lobbying Reform

Today, Governor Patrick announced he will create a Governor's Task Force on Ethics and Lobbying Reform. The Task Force will be convened by his Chief Legal Counsel Ben Clements and include experts and other distinguished participants on a nonpartisan basis to develop a package of reforms in time for the Legislature's return in January. Clements previously served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for seven years including four years in the Public Corruption and Special Prosecutions Unit. The Task Force is charged with examining the existing regulatory frameworks governing ethics and lobbying and making recommendations to the Governor relative to legislation necessary to strengthen current laws, regulations, investigative and enforcement mechanisms, and penalties. The Governor plans to include the reform package among the first bills he files at the beginning of the next legislative session in January.

Governing Reform

The Governor will also be re-filing and expanding upon legislation designed to refocus state government on matters of statewide importance by giving local communities more autonomy over local affairs. The current home rule structure dates from the 1960s and guarantees that the Legislature and the Executive spend an inordinate amount of time deciding when and how localities can tax, borrow, regulate private and civil affairs, and make rules for municipal elections. Forty percent of all legislation passed over the last two years was local laws that affect only one community. Sponsors of home rule bills are often forced to expend a great deal of time and political capital to get non-controversial, purely local matters moving and enacted, rather than working on matters of broader concern.

"Now more than ever, we on Beacon Hill need laser-like focus on getting our economy moving again and expanding opportunity and economic security," said Governor Patrick.

Continuing Reform Agenda

Governor Patrick also stressed the importance of moving forward with reform efforts in other areas of state government, including pension and benefit reform, education reform, health care reform - especially cost containment - and reform of the Turnpike Authority and other transportation practices.

A Renewed Call for Citizen Engagement

Underscoring his commitment to civic involvement, the Governor also called for renewed citizen engagement and asked citizens to take responsibility for their government by standing for election to local and statewide seats, by holding their elected officials accountable, and by voting.