

Coladipietro Email Newsletter

Comedian Jon Stewart made a sad commentary on Illinois politics when he said that in Illinois you have a better chance of going to prison if you are elected governor than you do if you commit murder. Let's be honest, Illinois (and even more so in Chicago and Cook County) is becoming nationally known for its corrupt politicians and scandals. It's gotten so bad that even the U.S. Attorney's office can't keep up. Chicago even has one of the largest political corruption divisions in the entire country.

The good ole boy style of politics has to stop. Government needs to be operated in the light of day and become more open and transparent to the public. The recommendations issued by the Illinois Reform Commission are a step in the right direction.

The 88-page report outlines 39 areas for the state to rid itself of the corruption and "pay to play" politics that has plagued Chicago and Illinois. The bi-partisan report (headed by former U.S. Assistant Attorney Patrick Collins) breaks down the recommendations into six categories: campaign finance, procurement, law enforcement, government structure, transparency and government hiring. However, the cornerstone of the reform commission's report is campaign finance reform including campaign contribution limits and public financing for judicial elections. Other recommendations include a nonpartisan process of drawing legislative maps, procurement process reforms to eliminate pay-to-play contracts, term limits for legislative leaders, stiffer Freedom of Information Act requirements and requiring bills to be voted upon if they attain a specific number of sponsors.

This report is a fantastic opportunity for the legislature to be accountable to the public and finally pass meaningful reform. However, the legislature may never have the opportunity because Speaker Madigan continues to block any attempt for the House to publicly discuss and debate the recommendations. My Republican colleagues and I requested that the Speaker schedule a committee of the whole to review the report. A committee of the whole would allow the House and Senate to fully debate the report's suggestions and allow for the commission members to testify on behalf of their report. Speaker Madigan not only opposes any public hearing on this legislation but when reporters questioned why the Speaker won't honor the House Republican request for this hearing the media was told, "No, there's no chance at all, for heaven's sake. If (House Republican Leader Cross) wants a few more opportunities on the floor of the Illinois House, he better do a better job of electing Republicans." (House Dem. Majority Leader – Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago), Chicago Tribune, May 3).

I think it's unfortunate when partisan politics get in the way of efforts to bring long overdue reform to Illinois. Ending pay to play politics in Illinois is and should be a non-partisan issue. The commission is made up of state's attorneys, private citizens and good government groups who have spent months holding hearings across the state, hearing suggestions from the public and putting together a very concise and honest assessment of how we can clean up state government. I am asking that Speaker Madigan and Senate

President Cullerton put aside politics and allow the legislature to have a straight up and down vote on this report.