

Last week, I wrote about the need for Speaker Madigan to call a Committee of the Whole on the recommendations issued by the Illinois Reform Commission. Well, I have good and bad news to report back to you. The bad news is that Speaker Madigan still refuses to call a Committee. However, the good news is that my House Republican colleagues and I took matters into our own hands and invited members of the Reform Commission to an open, bipartisan forum for anyone to attend – including Senate and House Democrats. I'm happy to report that legislators from both parties were present, and it was a great opportunity for us to question and learn more about these recommendations.

To quickly recap, the Illinois Reform Commission is composed of individuals who had no personal interest in the process other than implementing good-government reforms. These members ranged from Reverend Willis, who lost his children in the George Ryan truck driver scandal to Pam Davis, a hospital executive who first hand experienced “pay to play” politics with Governor Blagojevich’s administration. The 88-page report outlines 39 areas for the state to rid itself of corruption and some recommendations include: procurement process reforms to eliminate pay-to-play contracts and term limits for legislative leaders. If interested, you can learn more about the commission members and read the entire report at www.reformillinoisnow.org

After listening to the commission members, I was struck by how some of these recommendations are just common sense and should have been passed years ago. One proposal that stands out in my mind is reforming the way we draw new legislative boundaries every 10 years. There is no reason why we can not adopt Iowa’s system of hiring an independent contractor to use computer software to draw legislative districts. By making this process non-political, you are putting an end to incumbency protection and giving a voice back to the people.

I know that there are probably some skeptical people asking why this representative would actually support a plan which could cost him his elected seat. In all honesty, it is an honor to serve the residents of the 45th district. My parents were immigrants from Italy who came over looking for a better life for themselves and their families. Through hard work and support from my parents, I have had the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of this country. I ran for office as a way for me to give back to a country that has been good to me and my family. That’s why reforming Illinois is so important to me. Government and the reform measures that we put into place are meant to help everyone - not just one legislator.

There is a phrase that is commonly used down in Springfield “doing the work of the people”. Well it’s about time that we back up that talk with real action. I am hopeful that discussion on reform will turn into actual legislation – allowing us an opportunity to vote on every reform proposal. As you can tell, it’s about more than just protecting the status quo.