



Cultivating a Culture of Transparency

Testimony on S.200, Revolving Door on February 26, 2014

Senate Government Operations Committee

Testifying: Shawn Shouldice, Ben Kinsley, Kris Jolin

Good afternoon, my name is Shawn Shouldice and I am here with my colleagues Ben Kinsley and Kris Jolin on behalf of our client, Campaign for Vermont.

Thank you for allowing us to come before this committee to provide further information on S.200, the revolving door bill.

The committee had asked us to look at how other states with citizen legislatures have addressed this issue. A few states that are identified on NCSL as having citizen legislatures that have a comprehensive code of ethics are Maine, New Hampshire, and Georgia. Maine and New Hampshire both have fewer officials convicted of corruption per capita over the past 10 years according to the New York Times.

We find that the above states have an ethics commission and a set of laws governing the conduct of public officials. As a side note, Georgia has a financial disclosure requirement for legislators.

States identified by NCSL as having a citizen legislature:

Georgia	Montana
Idaho	New Hampshire
Indiana	North Dakota
Kansas	South Dakota
Maine	Utah
Mississippi	Wyoming
Nevada	
New Mexico	
Rhode Island	
Vermont	
West Virginia	

*Right hand column identifies states that are completely citizen legislatures, and the left hand column identifies states with mostly citizen legislatures.

Out of these states, only two (other than Vermont) do not have an ethics commission. All but 6 require disclosure or recusal for conflicts of interest. All but 6 have a revolving door prohibition.

Campaign for Vermont finds that while disclosure statements for non-profit boards tend to be comprehensive, the conflict of interest disclosure statement required when applying for a state board is much more lax. It would make sense to bring the requirements for applying to state boards up to the same standards as non-profit boards.

Cultivating a culture of transparency and accountability in state government is Campaign for Vermont's primary goal.

Campaign for Vermont is sure that you'll agree; government should be transparent, accountable and accessible to all citizens.

Campaign for Vermont supports the passage of S.200 but would encourage the committee to look at broader issues relating to conflict of interest and governmental ethics in the State of Vermont.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss this important issue with the committee.

Shawn Shouldice, Ben Kinsley, and Kris Jolin on behalf of Campaign for Vermont.

Ethics Quick Reference

The State Integrity Investigation is a joint project between The Center for Public Integrity, Global Integrity, and Public Radio International.

Better Government Association is an advocacy group that “promotes reform through investigative journalism, civic engagement, and advocacy”

- **Public Access to Information (Grade of D+ from SII and C- from BGA)**
 - State Integrity Investigation found that in real-world situations Vermonters had a difficult time gaining access to information.
- **Executive & Legislative Accountability (Grade of D- from SII, Grade of F from SII)**
 - One of 3 states without financial disclosure
 - 34 states have revolving door regulations
 - 29 states have nepotism regulations
- **Ethics Enforcement Agencies (Grade of F from SII)**
 - One of three 3 without any ethics oversight authority
 - 43 states have independent ethics commissions
- **Open Meetings (Grade of F by BGA)**
 - Received a score of 44.5% by BGA
 - Massachusetts scored 65%
 - Ranked 33rd by the BGA
- **Conflict of Interest (Grade of F by BGA)**
 - One of 3 states without comprehensive conflict of interest laws.
 - BGA ranked Vermont 50th for conflict of interest laws.
- **Ethics Score**
 - 2.1 guilty officials per capita in the past 10 years
 - New Hampshire had 1.1 guilty officials per capita
 - Maine had 1.9 guilty officials per capita