



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

BOARD OF ETHICS
PACKARD BUILDING
1441 SANSOM STREET
2ND FLOOR
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102-3026
(215) 686-9450
FAX: 686-9453

July 18, 2007

Honorable Joseph B. Scarnati, III
President Pro Tempore
Pennsylvania Senate
Senate Box 203025
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3025

Honorable Dominic Pileggi
Majority Leader
Pennsylvania Senate
Senate Box 203009
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3009

Dear Senators Scarnati and Pileggi:

I write to express the Philadelphia Board of Ethics' strong opposition to House Bill 1130, which would prevent the Board from effectively enforcing the City's campaign finance law. The bill, which passed the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on July 3 without a hearing or public debate, would effectively roll back the City's recent progress and disadvantage candidates who play by the rules in favor of those who do not.

In response to a series of scandals in recent years, the leadership and citizens of Philadelphia enacted a number of ethics reforms to promote government integrity, accountability and transparency. These reforms include a City law requiring local candidates and political committees to file their campaign finance reports electronically with the Board of Ethics, which is charged with enforcing the City's campaign finance law and contribution

Honorable Joseph B. Scarnati, III
Honorable Dominic Pileggi
July 17, 2007
Page 2

limits. House Bill 1130 would gut these reforms by prohibiting the City from requiring that campaign reports be filed electronically with the Board of Ethics.

According to press reports, some House members who voted for House Bill 1130 thought that the bill simply eliminated duplicative filing. To the contrary, the Ethics Board could not effectively enforce the City's campaign finance law without the electronic filing of reports with the Board. Electronic filing, which can be done from a desktop computer, enables the Board to quickly identify irregularities, such as excess contributions, across multiple reporting periods. In the last three reporting cycles alone, more than 500 campaign finance reports were filed electronically with the Ethics Board. It is simply not possible to effectively or efficiently identify violations using paper reports submitted to other agencies.

The Board and the Department of Records have gone to great lengths to make electronic filing as easy as possible. We accept four filing methods, including the State-approved software, Excel spreadsheets, CDs and online input, and we offered more than 100 training sessions for campaign treasurers, 12 online "webex" demonstrations and made help desk support available seven days a week during the two weeks prior to each filing deadline. The Records Department also makes computers and staff available to assist filers. As a result of these efforts, in the last reporting cycle, 91 percent of the candidates and committees filed their electronic reports on time and most remaining reports were filed a few days later. For the small number of campaign treasurers lacking basic computer skills, the Records Department plans to offer a basic computer course.

Our citizens want more, not less, accountability from their government. The Ethics Board therefore requests your support for Philadelphia's progress toward increased transparency and accountability in City government and urges your opposition to any legislation, such as House Bill 1130, that would undermine the City's ethics reforms. The Ethics Board would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to

Honorable Joseph B. Scarnati, III
Honorable Dominic Pileggi
July 17, 2007
Page 3

answer any questions, discuss these issues further or provide any assistance to the Senate. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard Glazer, Esq.
Chair

cc: All Members of the Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
The Philadelphia Delegation to the Pennsylvania House of
Representatives
The Honorable John F. Street
All Members of the Philadelphia City Council