

House Republican Press Release

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REP. FREY VOTES AGAINST FLAWED ETHICS BILL



“Hopes Democrats Can Work Together for Good Government Bill”

HARTFORD – Rep. John H. Frey of Ridgefield voted no on a flawed ethics bill due to a House amendment (LCO 5216) that changes the Senate Ethics bill (SB-333 passed overwhelmingly in the Senate) that would exclude all state and municipal workers from a new State Ethics bill. During the House debate on the bill, he called the last-minute attempt at exempting state employees ‘a blown opportunity and very, very disappointing.’

Rep. Frey has been a long proponent of revocation of pensions following recent convictions of Connecticut state and local officials and public employees. “In 2006, I introduced a bill calling for pension revocation that went as far as a public hearing. I’m pleased that that concept has garnered additional support over the past few years.”

Rep. Frey said that there was near agreement on major points of the bill, which included:

- Elected officials, as well as state and municipal employees, would lose their pensions upon conviction of a crime related to their employment.
- Failure by a public official or employee to report witnessing a bribe would become a class A misdemeanor.
- Chiefs of staff in the Capitol would be barred from soliciting campaign contributions from staff members.
- Ethics training would be required for newly elected officials as well as refresher courses for incumbents every four years.
- Employment with state contractors would be barred for one year for a state employee or official who played a significant role in awarding a state contract.

Rep. Frey says that he was disappointed that the House Democratic Committee Chairman with jurisdiction on government issues - in a surprise move- put in an amendment to exempt all State and municipal workers from a new ethics bill that would

revoke pensions for illegal activity by elected or appointed officials. In this move to amend this bill in the last days of the session the chairman of this committee could risk failure of passing an ethics bill.

Rep. Frey stated that “the amendment which would become the bill creates a double standard that would remove a major deterrent to malfeasance, allowing state and municipal employees’ protection from loss of pensions, even when shown to have a clear violation of state ethics code that other are subject to. Recent history has shown, corruption isn’t limited to elected officials – it is imperative that the possibility of pension revocation apply to state and municipal employees as well as elected and appointed officials.”

The Democrats in the State Senate said after the House vote that they have ‘serious concerns about this (House) amendment. It is a weaker, watered-down bill from what we passed.’

“My no vote sends a message that there should not be a double standard when it comes to ethics. Just because you are a government worker you should be excluded from doing wrong. Everyone should abide by the same rules and judged by the same standards, the public expects and we should demand it.

It is my hope that the Legislature revisits this issue during the upcoming special session convening on June 11th and corrects this ill advised amendment,” added Rep. Frey.

“We have the opportunity to do the right thing for the people of Connecticut, to pass legislation that will give them reason to believe that we are serious about regaining their trust. The sooner we pass strong, workable, responsible ethics legislation, the better,” concluded Rep. John Frey.