

- The Legislative Ethics Commission, the group of General Assembly members appointed by legislative leadership (4 Democrats and 4 Republicans), has the power to reject any findings of an Inspector General.
- A simple majority vote is required to move an action forward and no provision exists for breaking the tie vote, so anything serious could die for the lack of one vote. As a result, party line voting on the commission all but guarantees no serious consequences exist.
- The minutes of the meetings of the Legislative Ethics Commission are not required to be publicly disclosed.

There are a couple of pieces of legislation moving through the Senate now, where members are working together in a bipartisan fashion to find workable solutions to the problems in both the Legislative Inspector General's office and the Department of Human Rights. The proposed changes to the Ethics Act are simple and straightforward and I stand ready to support these changes when the bill comes over to the House.

The proposed changes to the Ethics Act, carried by Sens. Cristina Castro and Karen McConaghy, include:

- Most importantly, the bill will remove the outrageous barrier to investigative independence by removing the provisions requiring the Legislative Inspector General to seek the permission of the Ethics Commission before opening an investigation. As mentioned above, Illinois is the ONLY state in the country with such a provision in their Ethics Act.
- The bill will bring desperately needed transparency and accountability to the Office and the Commission, requiring publication of case summaries in instances where a violation has been found as well as mandating public release of meeting minutes. A supermajority, which by the design of the Ethics Commission would require bipartisan cooperation, will be required to quash the release of any case summary.
- Critically important for restoring faith in the process, four members of the public would join the Ethics Commission.
- Ethics Commission members involved in cases would be required to recuse themselves and be temporarily replaced on the commission.
- Finally, the bill sets out a process for the timely replacement of the Legislative Inspector General in the case of a vacancy.

Each chamber has other pieces of legislation on the topic, but progress has been limited. Just as I suggested last fall when this all began, it would be ideal if we could have started this process with the creation of a bipartisan, bicameral task force seeking real solutions to improve the workplace we all share.