

NEWS...



From the office of State Representative Kelly Cassidy

For Immediate Release:

05/23/2018

Cassidy Calls for Total Overhaul of Legislative Inspector General

Tuesday, Speaker Madigan reversed course from his earlier denials over the concerns I raised about retaliation and requested an investigation by the Legislative Inspector General. While I applaud his openness to an inquiry, I continue to have very real concerns about the venue he's selected.

The Office of Legislative Inspector General made headlines late last year after it was revealed that the position of LIG had remained vacant for 3 years, a situation many in the Capitol were completely unaware of, despite the early discussions about problems with harassment in our Capitol. During the time the office was vacant, several complaints piled up unaddressed and we had to pass emergency legislation to extend the statute of limitation on cases that had died of neglect during that time. Some members of the General Assembly, myself included, suggested that the statute empowering the LIG be overhauled at the same time to better equip a new LIG to truly operate independently, but the changes made were limited to the timeline extension at that time.

While the reasons for the lengthy vacancy in the office of Legislative Inspector General were never publicly reported, news reports at the time suggest that the issue related to a situation where the LIG found cause to launch an investigation and was denied permission to open an investigation by the partisan leadership appointees to the Legislative Ethics Commission. It bears repeating here - the Inspector General cannot proceed with an investigation unless a panel of members of the body they are charged with overseeing grants them the permission to do so. The flaws in the process don't stop there though, it is riddled with trap doors, blind alleys and loopholes designed to allow political consideration to bury any complaint that is politically inconvenient. In addition to the lack of true independence in choosing whether to proceed to the investigative phase, other problems include:

- Neither the LIG nor the Ethics commission are required to publicly share any information about complaints, investigations, or findings by the LIG, which is the mechanism that allows the partisan nature of the Ethics Commission to keep facts from the public.
- 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