



OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR THE AGENCIES OF THE ILLINOIS GOVERNOR

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Via Electronic Mail

The Chicago Tribune
Editorial Board
435 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Editor:

In the wake of the recent introduction of a constitutional amendment that would allow citizens to place ethics reform laws on the ballot and a University of Illinois report concluding that Illinois is among the most corrupt states, we once again hear the familiar call for reform of our ethics laws. Although talk of ethics reform started long before the introduction of the Lincoln Amendment or release of any report, in 2003 the Illinois General Assembly took a step forward in enacting the Ethics Act, creating the Offices of Executive Inspectors General. The mission of the executive inspectors general is to investigate allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, among other things. My office oversees agencies under the jurisdiction of the Governor, which includes over 40 state agencies, 300 boards and commissions, nine public universities and the regional transit boards or about 175,000 people.

However, like most laws, the Ethics Act was not perfect as enacted. Under the original law, executive inspectors general could not self-initiate investigations and persons could not anonymously report misconduct. In 2009, amendments remedied those shortcomings. In 2011, further amendments placed the regional transit boards under the jurisdiction of my office.

More is needed. Under the current ethics laws, only investigative reports involving employee terminations or suspensions of three or more days must be publically released. For example, current law did not require the full release of an investigative report involving fraud relating to over \$18 million of state grants, because no employee was terminated and only one received a suspension of at least three days.

On January 24, 2012, State Representative Fred Crespo (44th District) introduced HB 4066, a bill aimed at increasing transparency. The bill has the full support of the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor, because it would allow the public release of additional investigative reports involving misconduct. The release of more reports will increase transparency for citizens and, more importantly, may have a much-needed deterrent effect on future misconduct. Illinois citizens deserve to be fully informed and this bill seeks to do just that.

We urge the General Assembly, and anyone interested in good, honest and transparent government, to support HB 4066. The opportunity to strengthen our ethics laws today should not be missed.

Sincerely,



Ricardo Meza
Executive Inspector General