

CARROLL COUNTY COMET

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Now or never for ethics reform

By Lee Hamilton

The voters offered Congress an unparalleled opportunity on Election Day. Let us hope our legislators have the wisdom to seize it.

I'm talking, of course, about ethics reform. The upcoming session of Congress may be our best chance in a generation to enact meaningful reforms governing how Congress runs and polices itself.

Acting quickly, early in 2007, is crucial not only for addressing the problems that arose on Capitol Hill over the past several years, but also for restoring public confidence in a vital, but badly stained, American institution. Voters were clearly and unequivocally in the mood for reform in November and impatient with excuses for not moving ahead with it, and there is no doubt in my mind they will be watching carefully to see what happens in January.

The signals coming from the incoming House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, have been quite positive. She has said that the 110th Congress will be "the most honest, most open, and most ethical Congress in history," and the new House majority is already moving to put together a package of reforms. Republican leaders also seem supportive of efforts to prevent abuses of office.

So this is a hopeful moment - but it is only that. The hard work will come when Congress convenes and focuses on the details of changing fine words into deeds.

Some of what Congress needs to do is obvious. Banning all gifts, meals, and travel paid for by lobbyists is a key first step. So, too, are: requiring complete and readily accessible disclosure of lobbyist contacts with members of Congress; finding ways to restrict the access to sitting members by former members of Congress who have become lobbyists; and tightening up on ways members enrich themselves while in office.

Simply put, the freewheeling atmosphere that once prevailed on Capitol Hill - at least until the Jack Abramoff scandal dampened the fun - needs to become a thing of the past.

Somewhat less obvious, but no less important, Congress should also own up to its own bad habits. The new majority has already indicated that so-called "earmarks" are off the table for the remainder of the fiscal year, but it also needs to act for the long term by requiring disclosure of who is responsible for each earmark that lards future budgets.

This is a slippery issue, because there are some earmarks - a bridge, a new post office, a badly needed highway interchange - that members are more than happy to be associated with back home. But there are other earmarks - most notably, appropriations aimed at funneling federal money to this contractor or that contributor - that their sponsors would prefer to remain cloaked. So talk of requiring full disclosure of "district-oriented earmarks" misses the point; it's those darker payments to interests that may not be located in a member's district that need the full light of day and thorough vetting.

Finally, I am heartened to see that the notion of an independent Office of Public Integrity, separate from the congressional ethics committees, is at last getting serious consideration by House members and senators on both sides of the aisle.

This is a key reform. The slap-on-the-wrist approach taken by the House ethics committee toward members who knew early on about former Rep. Mark Foley's behavior toward House pages is a classic illustration of how hard it is for Congress to enforce its own ethics code. Even though an independent office could at best make recommendations for enforcement to the ethics committees, its words would carry great weight and ensure that, at a minimum, the American public would have a trustworthy yardstick by which to judge the actions - or inaction - of its representatives.

The truth is, it takes two independent forces acting at once to keep congressional ethics on the front burner, both legislatively and in legislators' minds.

One is pressure from the voters, and with 42 percent having reported in exit polls Nov. 7 that corruption and scandals in government were extremely important in how they voted last month, public pressure is a key influence at the moment.

The other is a clear message from the bipartisan leadership of the House and Senate that this is important, and that they expect and will enforce the highest standards of conduct in Congress.

No doubt there will be attempts in coming weeks to water down whatever reform legislation is proposed, just as the temptation will be strong, once the spotlight has moved on, to let standards slip. But as long as the public and the leadership remain determined to see that members of Congress act to reflect credit on the institution and to live up to what the American people expect and deserve, we have a good chance of regaining an institution that makes us proud and maintains our trust.

(Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.)

An acquaintance and I were stuck in traffic the other day as we made our way towards an early morning meeting. I was driving, she was filling me in on the business at hand. At one point she tried to pinpoint the year a particular event occurred.

"It must have been in '92" she said, adding "that was the year my brother and I reconciled."

Now the subject we were discussing had nothing to do with siblings, conflict or reconciliation. And up until that moment I'd known virtually nothing of this person's personal life. I didn't know about a brother or a history of family trouble. But referencing back to that particular year had triggered an important event in her memory. Clearly, 1992 had represented a watershed year for her, a monumental shift on a personal level and thus, the reference to her brother and their reconciliation.

A new year. Right now, from where I sit, 2007 lies ahead fresh with all kinds of possibilities. Why 2007 could be the year for a truly reconciled checkbook, or fewer bills, or better yet, an organized closet. Because the year is new and full of promise there's time and opportunity to sign up for the writing class I've thought about for so long, or get more consistent with the morning



All that's new

exercise I love to hate.

Personally, I've never been very big on making new year resolutions. Funny thing though, I think they are a great idea. What could ever be wrong with resolving to do the things one has put off, or regretted or secretly aspired to do?

Ann Landers, the nationally syndicated advice columnist, used to have a great reply when folks wrote to her about regrets of things not tried or not accomplished. Her answer was always pretty much a question, the very same question for anyone who lamented they were too old, or had put off too long or that it was too late for things like finishing college or taking up dancing or finding companionship.

"How old will you be next year if you don't attempt it?"

Under Lander's view of things, a new year is just a fresh invitation for another stab at those things that need doing.

Last year a couple headlines caught my eye that speak to this subject.

Marvin Northern got his

degree from Baylor University in Texas - at age 100.

A Spanish woman gave birth to twins just before 2006 finished off - she is 67 years old.

Then again, perhaps these particular news items speak more to the question of why we put our resolutions off so long.

Here's hoping Marvin doesn't have much in the way of student debt, and hoping too that the mom of twins already started their college fund.

Some time back a friend quoted to me advice from the teachings of a well-known support group. I'm paraphrasing here, but the sentiment was that "there is no situation or problem that can not be made better." In other words, you can't solve every problem, can't make things right or perfect or whole in each and every case. But, you can always help, you can always aide and you can always put some effort into making a bad situation - less bad.

So if I'm committed to a resolution in 2007, it would for me: be less lamentation and more action...on my part.

Thinking back to my acquaintance's year of reconciliation with her brother, I'm faced with the many possibilities ahead in 2007. How would you like to finish the following sentence:

"Oh, 2007, that was the year..."



Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Smith

Superior Court judgments are gathered from public records on file in the Carroll County Clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, Delphi.

New Filings

New causes were filed by the State of Indiana against the following: Margaret Penczu, operating while intoxicated - endangering; Kevin W. Hinton, battery and criminal mischief.

The following cases were entered for the defendant: James A. Saylor vs. Donna Jones; Heartland Screen Printing vs. Robert Perry.

Default judgements were entered for the plaintiff in the following cases: Cavalry SPV I

L.L.C. vs. Amy S. Williams; Beneficial Indiana Inc. vs. Christopher A. Martin and April D. Martin; Argent Healthcare Financial vs. Judy W. Alford; McKee Group vs. Belinda Snowberger.

Garnishments were ordered against the defendant in the following causes: Pearson's Gas vs. Dan Wethington; Esserman Tire Service vs. Tracy Garrison; Esserman Tire Service vs. Dawn Roth; Statewide Credit Association vs. Greg Wyrick; Indiana Receivables Inc. vs. Bonnie Short; Industrial Federal Credit Union vs. Michael W. Jackson; Harry W. Jones DDS vs. Chad Wrightman; Harry W. Jones vs. Kendra Miller; Argent Healthcare Financial Service vs.

Shelly Will. The following were charged with check deception: Patricia Westlane, four counts; Joetta Howard; and Matt W. Payne, four counts. I -

The following causes filed by the State of Indiana were dismissed: Jason L. Bush, Stephanie Perdue, Bradley Greene, Christopher M. Moyer, Robert L. Dinger and Ian Evans.

Kent A. Durbin, 19, of Monticello, pled guilty to false informing. He was sentenced to 180 days in jail, all suspended, and 180 days supervised probation.

Mark A. Stephens, 47, of Delphi, pled guilty to invasion of privacy. He was sentenced to 180 days in jail, all suspended, and one year supervised probation.

Circuit Court Judge Donald Currie

New filings are from public records available in the Carroll County Clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, Delphi. Other information regarding judgments and marriage dissolutions is gathered from public records found in the clerk's office.

Faustino Barradas was charged with forgery and identity deception.

Ruby M. Jenkins was named executor of the estate of Virginia M. Wagoner.

Vicki Dairs was named executor of the estate of Richard Lee Dairs.

Capital One Bank filed a complaint against Chris Burdine.

Gary Cleaver filed a complaint and petition for preliminary injunction against John, Betty and Mike Beale. First Financial Bank N.A. filed a complaint to foreclose mortgage against Ronald C. Marchand.

Country Wide Home Loans Inc. filed a complaint and petition for preliminary injunction against Barry L. Sandifur, Brockney M. Sandifur and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Danny A. Freeman was charged with three counts dealing in marijuana and maintaining a common nuisance.

Robert L. Ciavardoni, was charged with operating while intoxicated - endangering and operating a motor vehicle after forfeiture of license for life.

Web poll

Tell us starting Wednesday at our web site, carrollcountycomet.com

Each week the Comet polls its readers on a different topic. Vote online at carrollcountycomet.com starting each Thursday, and then click the Comments link to send us an email voicing your opinion. The best responses will be printed the following week.

At the Jan. 16 commissioners' meeting, a decision will be made about whether or not to pay county employees who are also volunteer firefighters and/or emergency workers when they are called away from work for an emergency.

Should the county pay workers when they are not at work because they are volunteering?

Yes, they deserve it and I trust the county to spend my tax money wisely.

I'll go to the meeting to help discuss the issue before I make my decision.

No, volunteering is just that.

Last Weeks results

How much of your Christmas shopping did you do in Carroll County?

3% - 100% - It's the only place I'll spend my hard-earned money.

10% - 75% - There were just a couple of specialty items I can't find here.

20% - 50% - I wasn't sure where to shop locally for everything I needed this year.

68% - 25% - I love the mega stores and that's the only place I shop.

Last Week's Results: Total responses: 40

Restaurant Inspections

Flora Citgo
 Routine inspection: 11/16/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Fishers Restaurant
 Routine inspection: 11/16/06
 Summary of violations: 1 critical, 2 non-critical

Monical's Pizza
 Routine inspection: 11/27/06
 Summary of violations: 1 non-critical

Camden Elementary
 Routine inspection: 11/27/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Indiana Packers Corp.
 Pre-operational inspection: 11/28/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

JC's Bar & Grill
 Routine inspection: 11/28/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Delphi High School
 Routine inspection: 11/29/06
 Summary of violations: 1 critical

Delphi Middle School
 Routine inspection: 11/29/06
 Summary of violations: 1 critical

Camden Mid-land Meals
 Routine inspection: 12/1/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Camden Auction Barn
 Routine inspection: 12/1/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Flora Mid-land Meals
 Routine inspection: 12/5/06
 Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Flora Pizza King
 Routine inspection: 12/5/06
 Summary of violations: 1 critical, 1 non-critical

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 Routine inspection: 12/5/06
 Summary of violations: 1 critical, 1 non-critical

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Because the public has a right to know...

In an effort to help our readers understand what government meetings are happening when and where, the Comet will now print upcoming meetings on a weekly basis.

- Monday, Jan. 8**
 √Flora Town Council: 6 p.m.
 √Delphi School Corporation: 7 p.m.
 √Delphi Board of Works: 6:30 p.m.
 √Delphi School Corp.: 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, Jan. 9**
 √Camden Town Council: 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 10**
 √Burlington Town Council: 7 p.m.

Public Notices appearing in this issue of the Comet:

Summons-Norris	10A	513
Sheriff Sale-Anderson	10A	513
Sheriff Sale-Brown	10A	513
Sheriff Sale-Ridgeway	10A	513
Excel-Stockholders mtg	10A	521
Sheriff Sale-Richeson	10A	523
Aderson-name change	10A	523
INDOT-Const. activity	10A	0111
Country Claims	10A	0111

Questions concerning Indiana's Open Door and Public Access Laws may be directed to the state's public access office, at 1-800-228-6013.

Marriage Licenses

Kevin Lee Handy, 32, and Anita Danielle Oberlander, 38, both of Flora.

visit us on the web
 carrollcountycomet.com