

Representative William J. Murphy
Speaker of The House
The State House, Room 323
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Speaker Murphy:

This letter is being written to express Operation Clean Government's concerns regarding the status of the RI Ethics Commission. As of today, six of the nine Commission members have expired terms. Another commissioner's term will expire September 2007, leaving only two commissioners with unexpired terms. One of those six, soon to be seven, positions is vacant as the result of Patricia Moran's resignation in August of 2006. OCG's concern is that other commissioners will resign, having fulfilled their obligation. Further resignations will make it difficult for the Commission to meet the quorum requirement of five members. If the Ethics Commission cannot meet its quorum requirement, all Rhode Islanders will suffer from the lack of independent oversight the commission provides.

House Speaker John Harwood's appointment, Richard Kirby, has been sitting with an expired term since 2002. By statute, you have the responsibility to submit a list of five names to the governor from which the governor will appoint one individual to replace Mr. Kirby. We intend to make remedying the current situation of vacancies and expired terms on the Commission a priority in the coming months.

We truly believe that Article III, Sec. 7 of the R.I. Constitutions should be viewed as a solemn obligation both by those who nominate individuals to the Ethics Commission and those who serve on that Commission - "The people of the state of Rhode Island believe that public officials and employees must adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct, respect the public trust and the rights of all persons, be open, accountable and responsive, avoid the appearance of impropriety and not use their position for private gain or advantage."