



# OPERATION CLEAN GOVERNMENT

N E W S L E T T E R

OCG, PO Box 8683  
Warwick, RI 02888  
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## Ethics Commission Buckles

By William H. Clay

After threatening OCG, its Chairman Robert Arruda, Vice Chair Beverly Clay and Board Member Janice Carlson with monetary sanctions on June 26, the Ethics Commission on September 3 allowed Attorney Lauren Jones to abruptly withdraw his clients' motions to sanction OCG and its board members.

Attorney Jones had defended Robert Carl, Director of Administration and the Attorney General's office had defended John Barrette, RI Court Administrator, against ethics complaints filed by OCG. These complaints alleged that Carl and Barrette were in violation of state ethics law when they participated and voted on their own pay raises while sitting on the Unclassified Pay Plan Board January 30 and 31, 2002.

In executive session on June 25, the Ethics Commission summarily dismissed the Carl and Barrette complaints at the initial determination stage of investigation. The attorneys for the respondents labeled the complaints frivolous, groundless and without merit, and filed motions requesting that OCG be sanctioned under provisions of R.I. General Law § 36-14-12(d) called "the Roney Amendment." Soon after, the Attorney General withdrew. (See below "The Chilling Roney Amendment Affect")

The commission welcomed these motions and seized upon the specter of threatened sanctions to punish OCG. The commission scheduled and conducted a hearing on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, at which Attorney Jones was given an official forum to attack OCG, unchecked by the commission. They all grossly underestimated the OCG Board, which responded aggressively to the threat of sanctions: backed by tremendous support from its legal team and its member-

ship as manifested by their contributions to the legal fund; and bolstered by a storm of negative press heavily critical of the commission for using sanctions to deter citizens seeking accountability from their government.



PHOTO by Ralph Greco  
OCG legal team: from left, Theresa Quinn, Sara Quinn, Rob Senville, David Clarke, Lee Blais

OCG did not shrink from a legal challenge to the dysfunctional Ethics Commission, which could lead to a restoration of its mandated mission to enforce the ethics code. In a vigorous defense against the imposition of sanctions, OCG filed 15 motions with the commission to halt the proceeding before the first scheduled hearing on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. At that hearing, OCG's attorneys were backed by a room filled with OCG members and reporters.

At the second hearing on September 3, the commission immediately granted Attorney Jones' request to withdraw his motions to sanction OCG. Still it was only a partial victory for OCG. Ethics regulations permitted Jones to withdraw his motions; however dismissal of his complaints, by its own regulations, is reserved to the commission. At the

hearing, OCG Attorney Rob Senville repeatedly asked if the commission was dismissing the complaint against OCG. The commission's Attorney William Conley would not further clarify the issue, saying only, "the matter is no longer before the

more, the commission had entered the sanction proceedings while relying on the legal language of the Roney Amendment. Having failed over four years to promulgate their own regulations as to how it would prosecute sanctions or how the accused could defend themselves, the commission was ignoring US Constitutional due process rights of citizens.

In their haste to intimidate OCG and without regulations to enforce the Roney Amendment, the commission proceeded to erroneously apply the law which requires that for sanctions to be considered, the commission must have dismissed the complaint at the probable cause stage; then "...if it finds the complaint to be frivolous, unreasonable or groundless, the commission shall require the person filing the complaint to pay a civil penalty of not more than five thousand dollars..." Ignoring these threshold requirements, the commission dismissed the three OCG complaints at the initial determination stage of its investigation and abdicated its authority to Carl and Barrette's attorneys.

The OCG pre-hearing motions were based on these arguments and on the Non-Profit Corporation Act, R.I. General Law § 7-6-9(a), which exempts from liability volunteer directors and officers of non-profit corporations (such as OCG) in the execution of their office and duties. Meanwhile, the OCG legal team was preparing affirmative actions against the commission and the commissioners.

Since the commission granted the withdrawal of the motions but left the accusation of frivolous complaints by OCG on record, there is nothing to stop the commission from pursuing these charges in the

*continued on page 3*

## The Chilling Roney Amendment Affect

Senator John Roney had legislation passed that authorized the Ethics Commission to sanction persons who file frivolous ethics complaints.

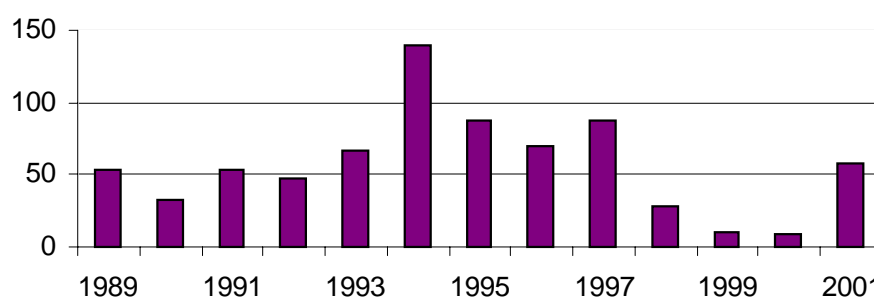
The senator's intentions were to stop political candidates from attacking their opponents with frivolous complaints filed just before an election. However, the affect has been to dry up citizen participation in the complaint process.

In the three years prior to the 1998 passage of the Roney Amendment, there were 245 complaints filed at the commission. Only 77 were filed in the three years after; and Operation Clean Government filed

56 of those, 47 of which were filed in 2001 against officials who had failed to file their

required Annual Financial Disclosure statements for two or more consecutive years.

Number of Complaints Filed  
RIEC 1989-2001



During the four years since passage of the Roney Amendment, the Ethics Commission has failed to promulgate procedures and regulations for their investigation and prosecution of frivolous complaints.

Given the reputation of the present Ethics Commission, what citizen, acting alone and with the prospect of facing sanctions by a hostile panel, is going to file an ethics complaint against any government official?

Operation Clean Government has filed suit in federal court challenging the constitutionality of the Roney Amendment and will pursue repeal of the legislation in the next General Assembly session.

## New OCG Board Members

**John Carlevale**—John is well known as the host and a producer of the weekly cable TV show "State of the State," now an OCG production. John has advocated a reduction in state indebtedness, voter initiative, separation of powers and a host of other state government reform issues. He also has coordinated OCG sponsored mayoral debates in Cranston and Providence. John, a retired assistant professor at CCRI, owns a publishing firm and authors textbooks.



**Jim DeCesaris**—Jim is retired from his private investigating business. He owns and manages real estate properties in Cranston and Warwick. He was very active in the Cranston United Taxpayers. For the past three years, Jim has participated in OCG board meetings and has served on various OCG committees. He will be bringing the wisdom of his experience to the OCG Board.



**Tom Sheeran**—Tom, appointed to an unexpired one-year term, is running for reelection at the annual meeting. A Rhode Island resident for three years, Tom joined OCG because in his own words, "[t]his is my first involvement in city and state political reform prompted by astonishment at the high prevalence of corruption that I've seen in Rhode Island." Tom is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Brown University School of Medicine and is with the Rhode Island Hospital Department of Psychiatry. We find his youthful perspective engaging at board deliberations.

**The following interim members of the board are to be affirmed at the Annual Meeting**

**Barbara Ball**—Barbara has been an active volunteer for several years and most recently has been active with the produc-

tion of OCG's State of the State cable TV show. Barbara graduated from Sturdy Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in 1960 and has a BSN and MS from Salve University. Now retired, she had been a Staff Nurse, Nurse Educator, Nurse Manager and Rehab Nursing Consultant. Barbara also enjoys volunteer work with Long Care Facilities and is actively involved in the Ocean State Chapter of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses.

**David C. Clarke**—David, a native of Lafayette, Louisiana, holds a BA degree in Business and Sociology from Westminster College. In 1997, David moved to Rhode Island, obtaining his law degree from Roger Williams University School of Law in 2000. David is in private practice focusing on civil and business litigation in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. He is a member of the legal team that is representing OCG and its board members on the frivolous complaint charges that were brought by the Ethics Commission.

**Hal Meyer**—Harold A. Meyer III lives in Wakefield. A self-described "compulsive entrepreneur," mostly concerned with intellectual property management, including patents and domains, he is also very heavily involved with internet website marketing. Bursting onto the scene earlier this year, significant media attention was received for his webpage BuddyCianci.com—which he put up as a concerned citizen to urge the resignation of Mayor Cianci. A frequent critic of government, he believes that abuse of authority is a great evil within societies. Hal is an honors graduate of Brown University.

**Will Touret**—Born and raised in Providence, Will has the following education and career experience: BA, Columbia 1980; JD, Brooklyn Law School 1984; Law Clerk, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York 1984-86; Litigation Associate, Proskauer Rose Goetz & Mendelsohn 1986-93; Principal, William G. Touret, P.C. 1993-present; admitted to practice in RI, MA, NY, NJ, CA; Certified Financial Planner; Fellow, Esperti Peterson Institute; member College Hill Neighborhood Association, Providence Preservation Society, RI Pilots Association. Will also worked with the litigation team representing OCG and its Directors in the frivolous complaint charges that were brought by the Ethics Commission.

## Park at T. F. Green—Buy Your Car Back

Everything goes up at Green. As of July 1, Warwick gets 5% of parking fees and Joe citizen pays 50% more for ½ hour parking.

This situation was created at the end of the 2002 legislative session, when the General Assembly discovered that, although there was a tax on rental cars at the airport, there was no tax on parking fees. (Something in RI was not taxed—isn't a fee to park on state property a tax?) To close this tax loophole, Warwick Senator Revens put through a bill to impose a 5% tax on parking fees at Green. The tax is designated to Warwick and will put about \$1.5 million annually into city coffers.

The Revens bill had no public hearings; the Governor's veto was overridden; but all the while, legislators assured us that the tax would be on the out of town parkers.

Apparently Warwick residents don't park at the airport.

Before tax the fee was \$2 for the first half hour in the short-term lot. Airport officials decided that mixing pocket change with dollar bills to collect 5% would cause further delays at the lot exit, which is already frequently backed up due to too few exit booths. Furthermore the parking lot operators were not willing to absorb Warwick's 5%. The solution: raise the fee to \$3. (The first half hour at the Salt Lake City International Airport is free.)

The prediction is that in the near term, when House Finance is scrounging for an extra \$1 or \$2 million, there will be a state levy on airport parking fees added to the Warwick tax.

## Annual Meeting and Election of Officers and Directors

OCG's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, will be held November 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:45 P.M., at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Warwick, in conjunction with the regularly scheduled board meeting. The board is recommending the following slate of officers and directors as presented by the organization committee. Voting will take place at this meeting.

### Officers:

Chair—Robert P. Arruda, Warwick  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair—Beverly Clay, W. Greenwich  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair—Janice Carlson, Charlestown  
Treasurer—Nolan Byrne-Simpson, Lincoln  
Secretary—Donald W. Cottle, Portsmouth

### Three-year Directors:

David Clarke, Barrington  
Ronald G. Santa, Middletown  
Thomas Sheeran, East Providence  
June Spink, North Kingstown  
Will Touret, Providence

### Two-year Directors:

Barbara Ball, Pawtucket  
Hal Meyer, Wakefield

## Retiring Board Members

**Bruce Lang**—After planning, organizing and conducting the highly successful OCG candidates school in April, Bruce retired from active OCG participation. Bruce, Sid Green and Charles Silverman co-founded OCG in 1993, by uniting the three reform groups that they represented. At the end of Bruce's term in November 1994 as the first OCG Chairman, he was awarded the prestigious OCG Golden Broom for his tireless efforts to build the fledgling organization and establish its mission to promote honest, responsible and responsive state government.



Later, Bruce chaired the group from January 1997 to April 1998 and then continued as ex-officio director and taking on special assignments.

Bruce remains an ardent supporter of OCG and can be heard championing our efforts on the Arlene Violet show, the Violet Round Table, Fridays at 4 P.M. on WHJJ. We wish Bruce much success wherever life takes him.

**Marcia Gerstein**—Marcia has served as a director since 1995 and a volunteer since 1993. Her husband Harold Gerstein also had served as a board member. Marcia has long served as a member of the Organization Committee and has agreed to remain in that role. Her valuable input at board meetings and her participation in several OCG activities will be sorely missed.

**Stephanie Rivera**—After several years as a director and active participant in OCG activities, Stephanie stepped down from the board. Stephanie ran successful OCG dinner/forums, the last one being early this year on the Rhode Island Judiciary. The diversified panel, moderated by Arlene Violet, received rave reviews by the audience. Stephanie is also well known for her passionate and provoking opinion pieces in the *Providence Journal*.

**Lee Blais**—Lee, an Attorney and Certified Fraud Examiner, has served three years as a director. He has been involved in many records requests including those of the Traffic Court and Beacon Mutual Insurance Co., and has argued these requests in the courts. Presently, he is a lead attorney in the OCG lawsuits against the Ethics Commission and its members. We are fortunate that he will continue as a member of our legal team.

## Remembering Don Koehn

We were saddened by the sudden death of OCG board member Don Koehn on July 20. Don was a four-year member of the board and willingly took on a variety of assignments. Whether it was the Traffic Court, Judicial Reform, reform of Providence City government, working on the OCG Legislative Committee and the Organization Committee, representing OCG on the Separation of Powers Task Force and the Redistricting Task Force, or testifying at the state house on these issues, Don always represented OCG with vigor, intelligence and dignity.

Don held those of us in OCG accountable to the highest ethical standards; and considering his experience as a professor of Philosophy and Ethics, his standards were the highest. If he disagreed with anything that anyone on the board said or did, we would be the first to know. His persuasive logic, his forthright manner and his high standards made it easy to respect him.

OCG is a better organization for Don having served on our board and Rhode Island is a better place for having citizens of high character such as Don. We are truly honored to have served with Don, and we will miss him.

## Correction

In an article "Where Does Whitehouse stand on Pollution" featured in our May/June 2002 newsletter, we erroneously stated, "Former state Representative Alfred Russo sold buffer-zone property...to RIRRC for \$1.9 million." It was Alfred Russo Sr. who sold the land to the RI Resource Recovery Corporation. We apologize for any embarrassment we may have caused Alfred Russo, Jr.

## Picking Up Buddy's Tab

As the sun sets on the Cianci Administration, the sorry mess of Providence's fiscal condition, which has been obscured by the mayor's flamboyance, will be revealed.

During the decades of his corrupt administration, the city's 6,000 employees were coddled with wages and benefits in excess of that provided by other municipalities. Some employees even assigned and accounted for their own overtime work. The mess in management of city personnel, lack of controls in the purchasing and contracts department, failure to make payments due to vendors and contractors, along with city hall corruption have drained city revenues. To cover the shortfalls, the mayor has developed his annual budgets with increasing dependency on state aid.

But the greatest threat to continued solvency is the city's overly generous retirement system. Not part of the state system, the city's stand-alone system authorizes dual pensions for the mayor and certain other officials, guarantees three percent COLAs (six percent for some), and grants hundreds of disability pensions to police and firefighters. In some years as many as 75 percent of retiring public safety employees have gone out on the more lucrative disability pensions.

Cianci inherited a \$160 million deficit in the retirement fund, passed along from previous administrations including his own. His most recent administration did not curb the excesses in the retirement system. Nor did it adequately contribute to the system fund, allowing the unfunded liability to soar to more than \$500 million.

With the unfunded liability increasing as still more employees retire, the system will become a pay-as-you-go system, which could bankrupt the city, A la Cranston! It will then be left to taxpayers—both Providence and State—to put the system back into solvency.

**The "free Buddy" adulators seem unconcerned with their tax liability in the post Cianci era.** They either don't believe he is guilty or are willing to forgive him to the extent that they would

even take him back as mayor. Few express outrage that his fellow convicted Plunder Dome felons, who have milked the city for years, and continued to receive their city pensions during the developing scandal: Corrente \$5800 per month, and Annorino \$3500 per month.

Annorino's lawyer argues that his client was not corrupt, just stupid, and should keep his pension. The City Retirement Board members bought their song and dance and failed to terminate the pensions, waiting for divine guidance from the city attorney while ignoring the ordinance making "honorable service" a pension requisite. Former Police Chief Urbano Prignano is receiving his pension. Did he serve honorably? Rosemary Glancy, according to her attorney, served honorably most of her career. Members of the Retirement Board have concluded, illogically, that it is unfair for an employee who went bad only a short time to lose his or her pension.

The Retirement Board is dominated by city employees. Their inability to discern between honorable and dishonorable service is a reflection of the public's systemic acceptance of corruption in their municipal and state governments. Judge Torres received scores of letters praising "the good Buddy" and requesting leniency for him and fellow crooks Corrente and Autiello. **Among those praising the Mayor were notables Bruce Sundlun and Alan Shawn Feinstein. One would think Cianci should be sainted instead of jailed.**

Are we in Rhode Island like Louisianans, becoming accustomed to corrupt government? In Baton Rouge, when a new scandal headlines, the saying is, "oh well, enjoy it, you paid for it." The scores of worshipers cheering Cianci as he emerged from federal court after sentencing indicate that we are enjoying it. We are certainly paying for it. And now before Buddy goes to federal prison we can enjoy him a little longer on WPRO talk radio sharing microphones with Steve Kass. How uplifting!

mission. Awards of compensatory and punitive damages and attorney fees are also being sought.

**A federal lawsuit naming the Commission and individual Commissioners was also filed on September 18.** The suit seeks to enjoin the Ethics Commission from using the Roney Amendment as a means to deny citizens' their constitutional rights to criticize government officials. The suit also asks for monetary sanctions from the commission to defray OCG legal costs.

There can be no doubt that this whole episode was a thinly veiled assault upon the constitutional rights of OCG and its Board members to criticize government and seek governmental redress, and further to intimidate OCG from filing future complaints. Be assured that OCG will not be deterred from its mission and will fight to ensure that the rights of citizens to seek government accountability are protected.

## A Majority Vote for the Winner

By Beverly Clay

The result of the Democratic Gubernatorial Primary cries out for Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). Myrth York won with only 39% of the vote, with Sheldon Whitehouse receiving 38% and Antonio Pires 23%. IRV is a simple solution that would have yielded a majority vote to determine the primary winner. This does not mean another election; it means that when you vote you can identify your order of preference of the candidates running for a particular office. If there are four candidates and no one receives a majority of the vote, then those who voted for the candidate who placed fourth will have their second choice distributed among the other three candidates. If there is still not a majority vote for a candidate, then those who voted for the candidate who now places third, will have their next choice distributed among the top two vote getters giving one candidate a majority vote.

This solves a lot of problems. In our current plurality election system, if your preference is for a candidate who you feel will not place among the top two, you may consider that your vote for this candidate will allow your least preferred candidate to be elected. Since with IRV a third or fourth place candidate would not be a spoiler in the race, more voters will vote for who they really want, knowing that if that candidate does not make the cut, then their second or third choice will come into play. This may well increase voter turnout as voters realize the advantages of IRV.

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, San Francisco adopted IRV for electing their mayor and other officials. In March, 52 of 55 towns in Vermont

voted to approve an advisory question calling for lawmakers to adopt IRV. New Mexico is giving strong consideration to adopting IRV. There has been IRV legislation in more than a dozen states this past year.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, the Utah Republican Party used IRV to nominate their candidate for US Representative. Australia, Ireland and Great Britain use IRV. Operation Clean Government ran a well-attended breakfast/forum on the IRV alternative in 1999. The idea was well received at the forum, but we found little interest among elected officials to change the Rhode Island plurality process.

In answer to those who have raised a concern that it's possible for a third-place candidate to win in instant runoff voting, Rob Richie, Executive Director of the Center for Voting and Democracy states, "Yes, it's possible — and highly unlikely. In Australia's 1996 national elections, out of 148 races none was won by a third-place candidate. Ninety-five percent of first-place candidates won their elections, and five percent of second-place candidates won their elections. But if a third-place candidate were to win, here's why—because at the end of the day that candidate was preferred over the others by the majority."

The results of the 2002 Democrat Gubernatorial Primary would have been interesting if IRV were in place and voters felt safe to choose their first preference. How many did not vote for Pires, fearing that he would place 3<sup>rd</sup> as the polls indicated? Considering his limited campaign funds and the strong probability that some of his supporters voted for Whitehouse or York, the 23% vote for Pires is impressive.

**New OCG Web Address**  
**www.ocgri.org**

**New Email Alert Lists at Topica**

OCG is in the process of switching our email alert list to Topica  
**http://www.topica.com/lists/OCG**

This will make the OCG email alerts list easier to manage and also help you, the subscriber. For one thing, the subscribers have more control. You can subscribe, unsubscribe, and/or opt to read the messages on the web by joining Topica. Membership is free.

The Topica OCG email alerts list is to notify you of OCG activities. You will not receive messages from others on the list and you cannot send messages to this list. The messages will only come from OCG.

To join, just go to our website and click on the last line of our home page or just send a blank email to: **OCG-subscribe@topica.com**

## Legal Defense Fund

OCG has found it necessary to set up a legal defense fund in response to the Ethics Commission scheduling hearings to consider sanctioning OCG for filing frivolous complaints. We appreciate the many generous contributions and notes of encouragement received from our members. The defense fund's continued growth is important. As can be seen from the article on page 1, we are currently in federal and state courts to preserve citizens' first amendment rights of free speech and the right to redress grievances against government officials. The costs to print the necessary documents, pay for court filings and transcripts, hourly rates for stenographers, serving summonses and taking depositions are very significant.

Checks may be written specifically to "OCG Legal Defense Fund" and sent to:

OCG legal Defense Fund  
PO Box 8683  
Warwick, RI 02888

### ETHICS, from page 1

future. Such actions, unchecked, could crush any citizen daring to act alone to file an ethics complaint against a public official without the protection of an organization like OCG. For these reasons the OCG Board voted, at its regular meeting on September 5, to authorize a letter to the commission setting forth stipulations that, if accepted by the commission, would end OCG's response to the attacks. On September 11, the commission answered rejecting OCG's proposals and holding itself blameless.

**On September 18, OCG filed suit in state court against the commission and each individual commissioner in his or her individual and official capacities.** Summonses were served on the commissioners on September 18 and 19. The suit cites the Rhode Island's Anti-SLAPP law and Nonprofit Corporation Act referenced above. The suit seeks relief from any and all commission proceedings or sanctions against OCG and its legal filing of complaints with the com-

## The Reek of Power Gone Bad

By Janice F. Carlson

If I were to say this article concerns a recent, much written and talked about story involving a stench that permeates Rhode Island with a toxic effect on all its citizens, you might think I was referring to the latest Louis Vinagro flap.

However, I am referring to House Speaker John Harwood's current involvement in the Wendy Collins saga. Even for Rhode Island's seemingly high tolerance in accepting unethical behavior displayed by some elected officials, this one is deep and far reaching.

If we believe the explanations given thus far, it seems that any person can approach the most powerful man in Rhode Island government, the House Speaker, and strike up a conversation which leads to a job in his office because that person had the "right recommendations." Then, when that person is fired for good cause and given a \$75,000 settlement for "stress" and a "bumped knee" the entire state government, including Governor Almond's Department of Administration head, Robert Carl and the then Higher Education Commissioner, William Holland, work in concert to create a new position for this person out of the goodness of their hearts. All this largess when jobs and budgets are being scrutinized and in many cases, cut.

The odor of corruption continues as Governor Almond and his Department of Administration stonewalled for weeks on the release of records, which could bring some clarity to the issue. Even though Ms. Collins asked that her records be released, it took a judge's order to do so.

However, the report from psychiatrist, James A. Gallo that details Ms. Collins's allegation of repeated sexual harassment by Harwood over a period of a year has just come to light. Almond's aides insisted this important document was not in their possession. Ms. Collins stated, (*Providence Journal* 09-06-02), "Gallo's report was the reason for the settlement."

Responding to public pressure, on September 20, 2002 the Joint Committee on Legislative Service held a rare meeting (the

first in two years) and all five JCLS members, who are General Assembly leaders, voted to waive their "attorney client privilege," release more documents on the matter and to allow their attorneys to respond to the grand jury investigating the case. While a step in the right direction, this action still does not explain why the Almond administration continued to drag its feet on releasing records.

Meanwhile, the matter is now before a grand jury and Ms. Collins is testifying as to why she was paid a \$75,000 settlement and given a job, newly created by the Almond Department of Administration, at Rhode Island College.

And in yet another twist of bizarre machinations in this case, Robert Goldberg, one of the most powerful lobbyists of the legislature, is "representing the legislature." *The Providence Journal, The Pawtucket Times*, primary gubernatorial candidate Antonio Pires, and Channels 12 and 10 are driving the court case for release of all the records.

So, in this rapidly evolving story we have Governor Almond, Director of Administration Robert Carl, House Speaker John Harwood, powerful lobbyist Robert Goldberg, attorney for the Department of Administration Samuel DiSano, Almond's legal counsel Claire Richards, legal counsel to the speaker's office Richard Kearns, and others embroiled in a huge scandal which has produced such a rank odor it would make any Rhode Islander gag.

Kudos to those members of the House and Senate who seem to finally be recognizing the toxic effect of the current Speaker and are publicly speaking out about his past and present manipulation of the General Assembly. Clearly things are rapidly changing and a shift of power is at hand. However, as House minority leader Robert Watson, R-East Greenwich, says in a *Providence Journal* article on September 18 about the members who are just responding: "...**these are the Johnnie-come-latelies who smell blood in the water and have suddenly found religion.**" **Indeed, where were they when the separation of powers bill got shot down?**

## Train Wreck Ahead

The state train is hurling down the track toward derailment caused by the General Assembly's irresponsible handling of the mounting budget deficit.

The Governor forecast a huge structural budget deficit in FY 2002 and beyond, but continued to spend. His administration negotiated huge wage increases for state employees. Two thirds of state departments under his administration continued to overspend their FY 2002 appropriations; even after he applied the brakes in October 2001 only four months into the budget year.

The governor and legislative leaders blame the budget woes on revenue shortfalls caused by the ailing national and state economies. Over spending cannot be the cause in their view. They continue to balance the budget with band-aids.

Their packet of band-aids to balance the FY 2003 budget and to supplement overspending and revenue shortfalls for the FY 2002 budget year ending June 30 includes these increases:

- Licensing fees for building contractors and associated tradesmen and inspectors
- Water quality protection fees
- Fees for testing and marking tank vehicles
- Monthly telephone surcharge
- Gasoline and cigarette taxes
- Real estate conveyance tax
- Grave liner fees at the veterans' cemetery

- Licensing fees for petroleum dealers
- Fines for 136 traffic violations
- and hunting and fishing license fees.

With the level of spending and projected revenue shortfalls, \$55 million worth of band-aid fixes will not balance the FY 2003 budget. So the governor and legislative leaders decided to sell \$1.2 billion of Rhode Island's \$2.8 billion share of the tobacco settlement for a quick \$600 million. This will be used to balance last year's budget and to cover the FY 2003 revenue shortfall. Some will remain to partially cover even higher revenue shortfalls beyond FY 2003.

Use of the tobacco windfall to balance near-term budgets while continuing to spend more than is coming in is like taking a second mortgage to pay for a vacation. Such fiscal irresponsibility drives from the state young working taxpayers, businesses and the more affluent retired.

Fiscal restraint is unknown among most state house officials. Defending the FY 2003 budget, House Finance Committee member Giannini stated it like it is, "We tried to do something for everyone in this budget." Campaign rhetoric of three of the five primary gubernatorial candidates promised more state spending without specific mention of where the money will come from. This mindset already permeates the legislature and with a like-thinking governor will only lead to huge tax increases to balance the budget, further undermining the ailing state economy.

## OCG's State of the State Cable TV Show

OCG's State of the State has featured candidate forums for those involved in a primary, including candidates for Governor, Secretary of State, Mayor of Cranston, Mayor of Providence, 1st and 2nd Congressional Districts. Watch for more candidate forums prior to the general election. These one-hour shows appear three times a week as follows:

Sunday, at 8 A.M. Cox Channel 13, statewide

Thursday, at 9 P.M., Cox Channel 18, in Central areas of RI

Friday, at 3 P.M., Cox Channel 18, in Central areas of RI

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Chair	Robert P. Arruda, Warwick
1st Vice Chair	Beverly M. Clay, West Greenwich
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Barabara Ball, Pawtucket  
William H. Clay, West Greenwich  
Ron Galipeau, Cranston  
Hal Meyer, Wakefield  
Karen Rosenberg, Cranston

#### Two-year Directors:

John Carlevale, West Greenwich  
James DeCesaris, Cranston  
Rod Driver, Richmond  
Ralph Greco, Warwick  
Sara Quinn, Providence

#### One-year Directors:

David Clarke, Barrington  
Ronald G. Santa, Middletown  
Thomas Sheeran, East Providence  
June Spink, North Kingstown  
Will Touret, Providence

### WHO WE ARE...

**OPERATION CLEAN GOVERNMENT** is a grassroots organization working to bring about positive changes in Rhode Island state government. We advocate the passage of legislation which will provide Honest, Responsible and Responsive state government. We file court suits and ethics complaints and alert the public to government wrongdoing via OCG newsletters, press releases, opinion pieces on editorial pages and appearances in the electronic media. Dues are \$12 for an individual membership and \$15 for a family membership. Donations of any amount are also welcome. As an all volunteer organization, there are no salaries or compensation other than the satisfaction that we are giving our best effort to make a positive difference in Rhode Island. Our costs include newsletters, mailings, court filing fees, office materials and supplies, publicity and public forums.

### OCG MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES, I want to join other Rhode Island citizens and help to promote Honest, Responsible and Responsive State Government.

New member  Renewal

My membership contribution to OPERATION CLEAN GOVERNMENT is enclosed:

\$12 Individual  \$15 Family (list all names to be included)  \$25  \$50  \$100  \$\_\_\_\_ Other

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

OCG is a non-profit organization, however contributions are not tax deductible because our activities include lobbying.

Yes, I would like to volunteer some time or participate on one or more of the OCG committees. Please call me.

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I heard about OCG from \_\_\_\_\_

**To promote HONEST, RESPONSIBLE and RESPONSIVE STATE GOVERNMENT in RHODE ISLAND**