

Assembly and Senate Budget Bills Include Welcome Transparency and Accountability Measures

A Good Immediate First Response To Bid-Rigging Scandals Is For Legislature to Advance Consensus Items in Budget.

The Assembly and Senate budget resolutions and bills contain two helpful measures to increase the accountability and transparency of the type of economic development projects spotlighted by the indictments and trial of Cuomo aides Joe Percoco and Alain Kaloyeros. These should be advanced as part of the budget as a downpayment on more far-reaching anti-corruption measures.

READY TO MOVE FORWARD

Database of Deals

The Assembly and Senate included in their budgets, an online “Database of Deals” that lists all economic development contracts and grants awarded to a particular business or organization. The Database of Deals will also detail all subsidies received, and cost to the public for each job created (Part KK in A.9508-B and Part LLLL in S.7508-B).

Expanded Transparency For Economic Development Agencies

The Assembly also requires entities administering economic development benefits on behalf of the state to follow the Freedom of Information (FOIL) and the Open Meetings Laws, and the Public Officers Law by requiring members of these entities to follow ethics and financial disclosure requirements (Part JJ in A. 9508-B). The Senate similarly required Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) to follow the Freedom of Information and the Open Meetings Laws. REDC members are additionally required to follow an ethics code which mirrors the Public Officers Law and adhere to financial disclosure requirements with some exceptions (Part KKKK in S.7508-B).

SHOULD STILL BE CONSIDERED

Boost in Funding for The Authorities Budget Office

The Assembly and Senate budgets did not include more funds for the ABO, but they should. This underfunded watchdog agency has a crucial role in preventing corruption in the state authorities awarding economic development funds.

Ban Campaign Contributions By Vendors Competing for State Grants and Contracts

The Assembly and Senate also did not act on the Governor's proposal to ban campaign contributions to the executive by vendors when bidding on a contract - but they should. New York's shocking lack of "pay to play" controls is an invitation to corruption.