



For Immediate Release

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## **Watchdogs Welcome Law School Deans' New Vetting Procedures for Ethics Commission Candidates**

### ***However, Groups Maintain that New Ethics Body is Not Truly Independent Because Elected Leaders Overseen by the Commission Appoint the Commissioners***

Our groups welcome the [review procedures](#) developed by New York's law school deans (who by law compose the [Independent Review Committee](#) or "IRC") to review candidates submitted to them by the state's elected officials.

Under state law, New York's statewide officials and legislative leaders appoint the members to the new Commission on Ethics on Lobbying in Government. The law school deans serve in a vetting role to determine if nominees are qualified to serve as ethics commissioners.

Watchdog groups sent the statewide and legislative officials [a letter](#) earlier this month asking that they appoint independent members to the new ethics commission.

The law school deans' procedures include the following important measures to increase the transparency and independence of the vetting process for ethics commissioners:

1. Prior to elected officials sending their nominations to the IRC, the officials must publish the names of nominees on their websites at least seven business days prior to formal nomination. The posting must include information about how members of the public can provide comments to the IRC regarding nominees.
2. IRC members must disclose to the IRC their own personal conflicts with any nominees, which may result in recusal of the member, or the participation of an alternate representative from the law school. If a law school has an institutional conflict with a nominee or an appointing elected official, that must also be disclosed to the IRC, in which case both the member and alternate member from a particular school may be recused.
3. The IRC must have a website to communicate to, and receive information from, the public. (The website [is available here](#).)
4. Once elected officials send their nominees to the IRC, neither they nor anyone acting on their behalf shall contact any member of the IRC, or any official of such member's law

school or university, with regard to the nominee. Inappropriate contact with an IRC member or such member's law school or university may compromise a nominee's review process and confirmation.

While the state's elected leaders, through their appointment authority, have the opportunity to maintain undue influence over the ethics commission members, as [noted previously by our groups](#), we believe that the law school deans' procedures are important to ensuring that the public has as much confidence as possible in our state's ethics commission. We therefore expect that New York's statewide officials and legislative leaders will follow the procedures established by the law school deans and that the deans approve only those nominees who are, in fact, of "undisputed honesty, integrity, and character."

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