

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 729

with Senate Floor Amendments
(Proposed by Senator T.KEAN)

ADOPTED: JUNE 25, 2015

These floor amendments eliminate local ethics codes and boards, which several municipalities and counties have established, in order to have a uniform ethics standard and uniform enforcement through the State Ethics Commission. The State Ethics Commission, in consultation with the Attorney General, would be required to designate a local government ethics adviser. The floor amendments would also permit the State Ethics Commission to impose reprimands and modest monetary penalties for minor ethics violations. For example, the State Ethics Commission would have the authority to impose a small fine on, or issue a reprimand to, an unpaid county or municipal official who committed only a technical or minor ethics violation.

The floor amendments would require every school district, charter school board of trustees, county, and municipality to appoint an ethics ombudsman to act as a liaison with the State Ethics Commission's local government ethics adviser in order to raise questions and receive advice on local ethics matters. The county and municipal ombudsman also would act on behalf of a local authority that is subject to the provisions of the "Local Government Ethics Law," P.L.1991, c.29 (C.40A:9-22.1 et seq.).

Finally, the floor amendments would allow the State Ethics Commission to phase-in its assumption of local ethics regulation to ensure it is properly staffed to handle its new responsibilities.