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Public Members

VICTOR DeLUCA
HONORABLE CAROL MURPHY
CURTIS TAO



New Jersey State Legislature

NEW JERSEY CITIZENS' CLEAN ELECTIONS COMMISSION

STATE HOUSE ANNEX

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MINUTES

TO: Members of the New Jersey Citizens' Clean
Elections Commission

FROM: Frank J. Parisi, Commission Secretary

DATE: March 11, 2005

SUBJECT: Minutes of March 2, 2005 Meeting

The initial organization meeting of the New Jersey Citizen's Clean Elections Commission (NJCCEC) took place at Prospect House on the campus of Princeton University on Wednesday, March 2, 2005, starting at 3:15 PM.

After a short introduction by each member, Assembly Major Leader Joseph Roberts welcomed commission members and thank them for their service. He noted that while the Legislature was addressing public concerns about elections by enacting legislation to curb 'pay to play,' that measure alone was not enough to take the money out of the political process. He believed clean elections laws, like those in Maine and Arizona, had the best chance of reducing the role of money in elections and to bring traditional outsiders-especially women and minorities-Cinto the process. He noted that the commission and the "clean elections" pilot project was a response to the growing calls for election reform. He was certain former State Senator Bill Schulter would be an excellent choice as chairman. Mr. Frank Parisi, from the Office of Legislative Services, then read the list of duties of the commission, as stated in P.L.2004, c.121, and provided a brief review of how the pilot project is supposed to work.

Former Senator Bill Schulter was nominated to be chairman by Senator Anthony Bucco and seconded by Hon. Carol Murphy. No other nomination was made; the members concurred by unanimous consent. The chairman thanked the members for their support and noted the presence of representatives

from many organizations that advocated the enactment of P.L.2004, c.121. He pledged to conduct the committee's business in a bipartisan manner, with many meetings in different parts of the State open to the public. He noted that the pilot project is a demonstration project but hoped it would be the forerunner of a new way of financing legislative elections in this State, one that would address the issue of excessive money in politics. He noted the job of the commission will be to develop a roadmap for 2007, when four districts would elect members to the Senate and General Assembly, and possibly for additional elected officials.

The Chairman designated Frank Parisi as Commission Secretary; the members agreed unanimously. Regarding subsequent meetings, the chair asked each member to advise the Secretary of their availability. Whether the commission should have a website was discussed; it was agreed that one would be necessary. The Secretary was instructed to have it operational as soon as possible and to include the explanation of P.L.2004, c.121 provided to the members already, together with contact information for each member and meeting dates once finalized. The chair asked that concise minutes be taken of all meetings and that they be circulated by e-mail prior to subsequent meetings. The taping of subsequent meetings was discussed; a final decision on doing so was deferred. Regarding the location of such meetings, it was agreed to meet at different locations around the State. The issue of adopting by-laws was discussed; the chairman felt they were unnecessary since the members appeared congenial and non-partisan. The chair asked the Secretary to look into the ethical restrictions on, and responsibilities, of the members and report back by no later than the next meeting.

Each member made a statement toward the end of the meeting. Mr. Tao expressed the hope that there be many meetings and that if members can't participate in person, they would participate by teleconference. He also suggested that the next meeting be with officials from the Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) who could explain how the pilot project will work. Mrs. Murphy stated she was excited to be part of the process and she hoped the pilot project would get more citizens involved in the elections and increase trust in the process. Assemblywoman Greenstein stated the pilot project put New Jersey in the forefront of election reform. She also felt that the pilot project would begin to open the electoral process to people now daunted by the process, especially women and minorities, and that it would ultimately diminish or end corruption. Mr. Lenox noted he was happy to be part of the process, especially because he believed it would get younger voters involved. Assemblyman Baroni expressed the belief that the pilot project had the potential to eliminate the State's culture of corruption and pointed out several issues he wanted the commission to consider. Mr. DeLuca stated that he believed the pilot project could provide fundamental change to the State's electoral process and he saw the commission having a role in guiding that change. Senator Bucco noted that while many in the Legislature were skeptical of the pilot project, he believed that in time, and with experience, these views would change. Chairman Schuler concluded the remarks by stating that the commission was off to a good start and that he hoped to have another meeting in three or four weeks, at which time he would invite ELEC to explain how the pilot project will work, based on its interpretation of the law and the regulations it will promulgate.

From the audience, Assemblyman Louis Greenwald addressed the commission, wishing the members the best of luck and expressed the belief the pilot project would level the playing field between average and wealthy candidates. Mr. Mark Murphy from the Fund for New Jersey, expressed that

organization's support for the pilot project and the work of the commission and offered to arrange for independent experts on clean elections to address the commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 PM.