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DEMOCRATIC CHAIR,
STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE



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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE 182ND DISTRICT

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November 17, 2011

Daryl Metcalfe, Majority Chairman
State Government Committee
Room 43 - East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairman Metcalfe:

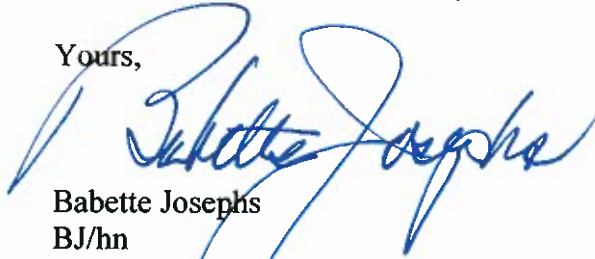
I suggested yesterday morning at the State Government Committee hearing on House Bill 1200, the Public Integrity Commission, that you form a Task Force to study and discuss the several amendments suggested by the Ethics Commission to the Public Official and Employees Ethics Act. The witnesses from the Commission repeatedly offered their help; they are experts, and no one can doubt their sincerity. I believe we have a unique opportunity here.

There is wide bipartisan support for improving and strengthening the Ethics Commission. Giving the Commission the ability to investigate complaints more thoroughly is integral to its ability to root out public corruption. After in-depth discussions on the amendments by a Task Force, we may find that we can save millions of dollars of taxpayer money by improving the existing Ethics Commission instead of substituting for it the Public Integrity Commission as envisioned in HB 1200. I also request that the task force include not only some or all of the four gentlemen who appeared for the Commission at yesterday's hearing, but also other House members interested in the topic who are not part of our committee.

The hearing yesterday illustrated the pressing need to restore public confidence in all areas of government. The press and public are aware that the recent budget cut appropriations to the very offices – for example, the Ethics Commission and the Open Records office – whose work promotes governmental openness, accountability, and transparency. Our taxpayers demand that we use their money wisely; they will see that it makes no sense to spend something like \$4 to \$5 million dollars on a new entity when we are shortchanging bodies that are already doing this work and doing it well.

Mr. Chairman, this issue is of such importance that I will convene this Task Force myself in my capacity as Democratic Chair of the State Government Committee if I do not hear from you by Friday, November 18, 2011 that you intend to implement this strategy as an official State Government Committee activity.

Yours,



Babette Josephs
BJ/hn

CC: State Government Committee Members
Frank Dermody, Democratic Leader
Joe Markosek, Democratic Appropriations Chair
Mike Sturla, Democratic Policy Chair
Interested Parties