

January 14, 2020



Good Government Groups Call for Transparency in Developing Ethics Legislation in the 102nd General Assembly

On January 12, the Illinois legislature held a hearing and vote on an 87-page [ethics bill](#) in the middle of the night at the end of a lame duck session. This bill was introduced in the final hours of the 101st General Assembly with no notice to stakeholders and without the promised public report from the Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform. While the clock ran out on the session before the bill could pass, the process was deeply concerning to those of us who care about open, ethical government. It flew in the face of transparency, did little to remedy Illinois' reputation as a bastion of closed-room deals and political corruption, and further undermined public trust in state government.

The release of the Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform's report was delayed in March by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than six months later, [we called on the Commission](#) to finally issue its recommendations. The last we heard of the Commission's efforts was in October, when co-chair Leader Greg Harris [told WTTW](#) he planned to release the recommendations before the legislature reconvened in January. That never happened.

Instead, a deeply flawed bill was presented through an opaque process that prevented any feedback or collaboration. The bill touched on some subjects we brought to the Commission last year, but it also omitted key issues like conflicts of interest and oversight of legislators. Moreover, it contained provisions, such as the preemption of home rule, that would have dramatic implications for localities, businesses, advocates, and other stakeholders. Yet the bill dropped with no time for meaningful consideration of those serious concerns.

We understand this is how a lot of legislation proceeds in Springfield. But the public was promised something different this time. However well-intentioned, measures presented through this rushed process do little to restore trust in government, which is the impetus for ethics reform in the first place.

As the 102nd General Assembly convenes, our organizations urge members to work on comprehensive ethics reform through an open, deliberative process that includes key stakeholders and advocates, a process which will produce a far better result for the people of Illinois. Let's get to work.

Signed,

The Better Government Association (BGA)
Change Illinois

