

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

RICHMOND



WILLIAM J. HOWELL
SPEAKER

TWENTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
RULES (CHAIRMAN)

October 20, 2009

The Honorable William Whitney Sweeney, Chairman
House Ethics Advisory Panel
1930 Royal Oak Drive
Lynchburg, Virginia 24503

Dear Judge Sweeney,

As you know, the House Ethics Advisory Panel inquiry that I requested on August 24, 2009 has up to 120 days to render its findings and offer possible recommendations regarding any possible violation by Delegate Phillip A. Hamilton of the Commonwealth's Comprehensive Conflict of Interest Act. It is now the approximate halfway point permitted by the Code of Virginia for disposition of this matter. Accordingly, I would like to reiterate my strong desire for the Ethics Panel to determine the complete set of facts in this very unfortunate situation while concluding your work as expeditiously as possible.

Of course, I understand that while the Ethics Panel conducts its investigation, I, like every other member of the House, have absolutely no direct or unique influence over your non-partisan fact-finding proceedings and deliberations. I fully support that long-standing stipulation in the law. It removes any appearance of possible favoritism by any lawmaker as the Ethics Panel conducts its serious business.

I continue to believe it is in the best interest of all Virginians, the House of Delegates as an institution of elected officeholders and Delegate Hamilton for the Ethics Panel to reach a full and final public conclusion, if possible, well in advance of the maximum allowable timeline. A proper accounting of this matter, based upon impartially determined facts reviewed by the "outside-the legislature" entity that you lead is an outcome desired by me and everyone else involved or impacted. I also remain convinced that an important benefit of this impartial process is that it defends the public trust by taking partisan politics out of any ethical or legal inquiries involving the manner by which a delegate performs his or her legislative duties.

As I noted when alerting you of my intention to request this inquiry, I appreciate your service as Chairman of the House Ethics Panel. I also hope that you and your distinguished colleagues can finish this investigation and present any findings in the most timely fashion possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

William J. Howell
Speaker
Virginia House of Delegates