



WILLIAM J. HOWELL
SPEAKER

TWENTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
RULES (CHAIRMAN)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Statement of Speaker William J. Howell

-- on His Voluntary Public Release of House Ethics Advisory Panel Report on former Delegate Hamilton --

RICHMOND, VA – Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford) today issued the following statement regarding his decision to voluntarily release to the public the House Ethics Advisory Panel’s report due to the legislative inquiry that he initiated into potential violations of the Commonwealth’s Comprehensive Conflict of Interest Act by former Delegate Phillip A. Hamilton.

“Appropriate ethical conduct of elected officials is essential to safeguarding trust in government by the citizens those officials represent and in whose name they serve. Acting earlier this year to preserve that trust and protect the institutional integrity of the entire Virginia House of Delegates, I took unprecedented action, as Speaker, when I initiated a legislative inquiry by the House Ethics Advisory Panel into possible violations of the Commonwealth’s Comprehensive Conflict of Interest Act by then-Delegate Hamilton. Virginia long has had a reputation for good government and I very much want to keep it that way.

“The Ethics Panel has informed me that they have ended their inquiry for lack of statutory jurisdiction. In the interest of full disclosure and public transparency, I am voluntarily sharing today with all Virginians the Ethics Panel’s recent report regarding former Delegate Hamilton. While I regret that their fact-finding inquiry did not reach a final conclusion whether an actual violation of state law occurred, I understand the decision by the Ethics Panel and respect them for not wanting to operate outside of the legal authority granted by the Code of Virginia.

“Judge William Whitney Sweeney ably has led the five-member House Ethics Panel for many years now. I appreciate his dedication to fair judgment and the commitment of each member to ensuring due process in matters within their purview. A benefit of this impartial process is how it defends the public trust by taking partisan politics out of any ethical inquiries involving the manner by which a delegate performs his or her legislative duties.

“Looking ahead, while other avenues of investigation into this matter may be available if not already ongoing, I will lead in ensuring that the manner in which legislative ethics inquiries are conducted is thoughtfully examined during the 2010 Session of the General Assembly. Exploring opportunities to modify or improve the current process is consistent with my duties as Speaker to protect and uphold the institutional integrity of the House of Delegates.”

Attached is the November 16 letter constituting the [report from the House Ethics Advisory Panel that Speaker Howell received on November 20, 2009](#). Also attached is an [October 20, 2009 letter from Speaker Howell to Judge Sweeney expressing his desire for impartially determined facts](#) by this “outside-the-legislature” entity. Finally, [Speaker Howell’s original August 24, 2009 letter launching the inquiry](#) is attached for the record.

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