

## **Approve bill to shine light on ethics investigations**

Tuesday, February 20, 2007 1:34 AM CST

Removing some of the secrecy in enforcing the state's Ethics Act would bolster the public's faith in that system.

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A bill introduced by state Sen. Bill Brady, R-Bloomington, would accomplish that by requiring the executive inspector general to provide the Executive Ethics Commission with summary reports of investigations.

Brady's legislation, Senate Bill 151, also specifies that investigatory reports and quarterly reports of the Office of Executive Inspector General are subject to the Freedom of Information Act, although personal information contained in the reports must be removed before disclosure.

The bill should be passed.

Under current law, such reports aren't subject to public disclosure. They aren't even given to the Executive Ethics Commission, only the particular state agency involved.

Brady said, "To cloak or hide this information from the public just doesn't seem right when tax dollars are used."

As we noted in an editorial last July, it is difficult for the Ethics Commission to oversee the work of investigators - as required by the Ethics Act - when they are denied access to the investigators' reports.

In fact, Executive Inspector General James A. Wright supports Brady's bill.

"I fully understand how this lack of transparency obscures the work of this office and contributes to public skepticism over the integrity of our investigations," Wright said.

Wright welcomes having "the brightest light" shine on his office's operations, while at the same time maintaining its independence.

With a former governor appealing his conviction on federal corruption charges and a long history of Illinois officials with ethical challenges, no one in this state should need to be told the importance of strong ethics rules.

Other lawmakers from both parties should join in sponsoring this straight-forward legislation so the Ethics Commission can do its job and the public can better evaluate the work of the inspector general.

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