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### **Editorial: Financial disclosure under siege**

The sound of reform in the Louisiana Legislature is deteriorating into a mangled cacophony that is working to defeat a piece of ethics legislation that once showed promise.

The initial bill, developed after many months of research and conversations, called simply for additional financial disclosure by all candidates for statewide elective office. It would provide a degree of transparency that does not exist and it would give the public some ability to identify potential conflicts of interest.

But in the what's-good-for-the-goose-is-good-for-the-gander mentality, legislators have proposed that the more intense disclosure information should also be required of all elected officials. Not only that, they should be required of all appointed officials, including the members of the Ethics Board. And then there are a couple of entirely reasonable parts of the existing statute that should be removed while we're at it.

Unlike the original proposal, these additional provisions have not had the benefit of research or thoughtful discussion. That's no surprise, of course, in the halls of the statehouse, but it is a disappointment once again.

The now-bloated House Bill 730 requires all elected or appointed officials to submit lengthy personal financial details — what they make, what they invest and what they owe — for themselves and their spouses. It appears to cover everyone from dogcatcher to police juror to volunteer board member to the state Ethics Board. The effect, of course, will likely be that a reasonable proposition will go down in flames due to provisions that have become so unworkable and so onerous to so many.

There are surely many positions of public trust that should require additional public disclosure by their incumbents. But as the Council for a Better Louisiana points out, a better approach "is to have the appropriate legislative committees study the issue between sessions and develop thoughtful legislation after weighing and evaluating all the pros and cons."

When the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee reviews the matter on Wednesday, its members should listen to CABL and to all citizens who see past the lofty-sounding rhetoric to the not-so-subtle attempt to kill a good piece of legislation. It should ditch the add-ons in favor of the original proposal.