

June 21, 2007  
The Town Talk

### **Senate passes bill requiring more detailed financial reporting**

BATON ROUGE -- The Louisiana Senate upped the ante on glass pockets legislation Wednesday, voting to require far more detailed personal financial disclosure from all elected officials in the state.

The Senate twice voted to require Louisiana public officials to report all income within 10 ranges, the smallest less than \$1,000 and the largest greater than \$5 million, the same ranges used by members of Congress in Washington.

The House must agree to the Senate change when House Bill 730 goes back to the representatives for consideration.

"This is a chance to be No. 1," said Sen. Walter Boasso, D-Chalmette, a candidate for governor. "Let's put something in place that's good for the people."

The idea being glass pockets legislation is that disclosure of all sources of income makes it easier for the public to spot conflicts-of-interest. Supporters say glass pockets legislation would help polish Louisiana's tarnished national political image of a corrupt state, while opponents argue that it is an invasion of privacy.

Senators did vote to exempt officials in jurisdictions with populations of less than 5,000. Sen. Clo Fontenot, R-Livingston, said people in small towns know everybody anyway.

But senators refused to accept a proposal to exempt all local officials. State Sen. Robert Adley, D-Benton, wanted to limit the bill to the 144 legislators and nine statewide elected officials and candidates for those offices. There are about 2,900 elected officials in the state.

"I've got towns where we are walking the streets trying to find someone to run for mayor," Adley said. "Everybody knows what everybody does in a small town."

But Sen. Mike Smith, D-Winnnsboro, with a strong majority opposing Adley, said if the Legislature exempted local officials, "we would be doing half our job. We need to show the people we are open for business not for our personal gain, but for the good of our state."

After a long line of speakers voiced opposition, Adley gave up.

As it came to the Senate floor, the bill would have required legislators to provide the names of the sources of income and whether it was more or less than \$10,000.

But during the nearly two-hour debate, Sen. Rob Marionneaux, D-Livonia, won a 19-17 vote approving his plan requiring more detailed descriptions of income and requiring check off boxes disclosing whether the income fell into one of the following ranges:

not more than \$1,000  
\$1,000 to \$2,500  
\$2,500 to \$5,000  
\$5,000 to \$15,000  
\$15,000 to \$50,000  
\$50,000 to \$100,000  
\$100,000 to \$500,000  
\$500,000 to \$1 million  
\$1 million to \$5 million  
Greater than \$5 million.

Sen. Ann Duplessis, D-New Orleans, who handled the reform bill on the Senate floor, joined opponents who said that such detailed ranges would cause the House to reject the bill, putting the outcome in jeopardy as the Legislature heads into its final week. By constitutional mandate, the session ends at 6 p.m. next Thursday, June 28. Everything not enacted by that hour dies.

Congressional jobs are full-time jobs, while legislative and many local posts are part-time, Duplessis said. "That is much more invasive," she argued.

But senators voted 23-16 against her attempt to return the reporting requirement to less or more than \$10,000.

"The \$10,000 check-off is just a teaser," said Sen. Joe McPherson, D-Alexandria. "They don't really know what you're making."

(John Hill)