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LANewslink

Our Dark-Hearted Lawmakers Had No Intentions Of Coming Clean With The Voters

Louisiana lawmakers rank 44th among lawmakers nationwide in disclosure requirements. Some states have no requirements at all, so there's not much in the way of policing public integrity behind our own Legislature.

Some lawmakers, of course, tried to remedy that situation last session with the introduction of "glass pockets" legislation. Proposed were financial disclosure laws that would have made lawmakers, too, toe the line much like their governor does.

Although the legislation was put forth with good intentions by State Sen. Robert Adley, D-Benton, what ensued was first a farce, followed by a fiasco. Our dark-hearted lawmakers had no intentions of coming clean with the voters, and effectively killed the legislation.

The final blow was delivered by State Rep. Charlie DeWitt, D-LeCompte, the type of elected hack for which term limits was created. Near session's end, when the House appeared close to taking action on ethics legislation, DeWitt, speaking to the very small men in his chamber, taunted the chambers of commerce, business leaders and reform groups statewide who had dared to suggest that our Legislature ought to come clean with the voters.

"It's time for the chambers to grow up and admit that politics are politics," DeWitt told his colleagues who were only too happy to kill ethics efforts for the session.

But ethics reform in this state did not necessarily die on the House floor that day, despite the efforts of DeWitt and others that tried to kill it. Some in the House that day are running for reelection; others, term limited, are seeking seats in the upper chamber.

Each candidate who aspires to legislative office in Louisiana ought to be asked his or her position on ethics reform. Every candidate ought to be made to pledge to accept reform as proposed in the 2007 session. Those who enter this office will be asked and must answer.

You make them answer, too.