



A new bill proposed in the House aims to make ethics rules for local government officials uniform across Illinois.

Right now, local government officials are not all required to follow the same ethics rules. But a new bill making its way through the legislature in Springfield could change that.

The bill, called the Illinois Local Government Appointee Ethics Act, aims to apply ethics rules to all local officials, especially those appointed — and not elected — to their positions. That means it will affect village, school, library and other boards throughout the state.

A new bill proposed House aims make ethics rules for local government officials uniform across Illinois.

House Bill 2925 was introduced by state Rep. Laura Fine, D-17th, of Glenview, on Feb. 25. State Rep. Carol Sente, D-59th, of Vernon Hills, whose district encompasses parts of Buffalo Grove, Vernon Hills, Mundelein and Libertyville, is a co-sponsor along with a number of other state representatives.

Fine said, currently, even elected officials in some municipalities aren't bound by specific ethics laws — it depends on the municipality's code.

"This would ensure that everyone has to abide by the same rules," Fine said.

The bill was recommended by the Cook County Inspector General, Fine said, after issues arose with a sanitary district that is part of Northfield Township.

An April 2012 report shows the Inspector General found that the district's board of trustees mismanaged the district by overpaying themselves.

This went on for three years and taxpayers were affected, Fine said. But the district trustees' actions were not technically illegal, because they were not bound by any ethics guidelines, she added.

"It (ethics guidelines) has got to be something more uniform," Fine said.

Locally, Libertyville township Supervisor Kathleen O'Connor said that the township's officials are not required to sign an ethics pledge or receive any ethics training. Though the legislation does not specifically call for any such training, O'Connor said she believes it would be a good idea.

The local township does not have any standing boards or commissions to which people are appointed, O'Connor said, but that isn't the case for all townships. Nearby Warren Township, for instance, may have quite a few as they have a more robust set of programs, she added.

Libertyville Village President Terry Wepler said the village has a policy concerning ethics and that all elected and appointed officials must abide by it. Wepler said he had no problem with the proposed legislation.

"It's what we expect of all of our appointed officials now," he said.

Since not all municipalities have their own ethics guidelines though, Fine said that this bill will mean everyone is subject to the same rules.

Sente said she supports the bill because it encourages government transparency, an issue she feels strongly about.

“It is local government including local boards and commissions that often most directly affect our constituents,” she said.

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