



**BY HAND**

May 10, 2017

Senator John J. Flanagan, Temporary President and Majority Leader  
New York State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 330  
Albany, New York 12247

**Re: Diversion of Committee Chair Stipends**

Dear Majority Leader Flanagan:

We write to you in your capacity as Temporary President and Majority Leader of the Senate to urge that you end the practice of allowing stipends for senators who serve in a special capacity but who do not hold the position of committee chair or ranking minority member.

This practice, described in an article in *The New York Times*, is highly disturbing and exactly the type of legislative leadership legerdemain that feeds public cynicism about state government transparency.<sup>1</sup>

The Legislative Law section 5-a authorizes additional payments to committee chairs and ranking committee members in recognition of the additional workload these part-time legislators take on as part of their public service. For the committee chairs to forgo these amounts specifically authorized under law for their work chairing the committees and divert their stipends to other committee members subverts the rationale for the additional financial allowances and is patently misleading to the public. If the Legislature believes that special capacity allowances are appropriate for committee members other than the chair and ranking minority member, the remedy is to amend the Legislative Law in a transparent manner to authorize such payments under law.

We thank you for your attention to this letter and eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

Dick Dadey, Executive Director  
Citizens Union

Susan Lerner, Executive Director  
Common Cause New York

Laura Bierman, Executive Director  
League of Women Voters – NYS

Blair Horner, Executive Director  
NYPIRG

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<sup>1</sup> *For Group of Breakaway Democrats in New York, It Pays to Be No. 2*, Jesse McKinley, *The New York Times*, May 9, 2017. Accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/nyregion/new-york-independent-democratic-conference-republicans.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fnyregion&action=click&contentCollection=nyregion&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=5&pgtype=sectionfront>.