

# Special Report

*from*  
*State Representative*

## Phillip Pinion

Weekly Newsletter from Capitol Hill in Nashville

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### **HOUSE CONTINUES FOCUS ON ETHICS**

The people of Tennessee have spoken and they want to know what is being spent on legislators. The voters have a right to know, and we have sought to make sure they do.

This week in Nashville, the House of Representatives continued with its focus on Ethics Reform. Landmark legislation was passed to further regulate lobbyists and a ground-breaking, bipartisan Ethics Panel was appointed.

On Tuesday, the Local Government Subcommittee passed legislation that will ensure all lobbyists disclose expenses paid to legislators. HB 1086 requires lobbyists to disclose the amount spent on members of the Tennessee General Assembly for entertainment purposes. This landmark legislation will provide a greater amount of public disclosure within the governing process.

And on Thursday, Speaker Naifeh appointed a select committee to examine appropriate ways for the House to police itself in regard to ethic-violation charges. Among the ideas to be discussed by this committee are establishing a permanent and independent Ethics Commission, examining the role of the Registry of Election Finance and ways to review ethic-violation complaints.

The Ethics Panel consists of ten members—five Democrats and five Republicans—and is co-chaired by each party's leader. The equal and bipartisan panel can begin meeting immediately and was asked to relay findings back to the general membership as soon as possible.

Since the start of the 104<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in January, the House has maintained a determination to strengthen the accountability of your state government. The action taken this week follows previous Ethics legislation passed by the House during this year's session. HB 1 prohibits consulting

contracts with the state to be entered into by legislators and HB 1090 and HB 1098 close gaping loopholes in campaign finance regulations.

While some continue to posture themselves politically through rhetoric and propaganda, my colleagues and I have focused on affecting change and have achieved results. Accountable government is effective, efficient and responsive government. It addresses the changing needs of the state and its citizens in an efficient, appropriate and equitable manner. It demonstrates sound planning and fiscal management. It encourages its citizens to be informed participants in civic affairs and to become actively involved in the governing process. And it is one of the most important responsibilities of our elected officials because virtually all other programs and operations of government depend on an efficient system.

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