

Lawmakers eye election law agreement

Nozzolio, Casale irked by board refusal on comptroller race

By CRAIG McGUIRE
Gazette staff writer

Lawmakers are closing in on legislation that would require candidates for comptroller and attorney general to disclose campaign contributions and expenses.

Assembly Speaker Saul Weprin said legislation must be passed to insure that ethical standards applying to candidates in the general elections apply to those seeking legislative appointments.

"We want to avoid even the appearance of financial impropriety."

Senate Election Committee Chair Michael Nozzolio, RC-Fayette, agreed.

"The comptroller must be above reproach and cannot afford even a hint of a conflict of interest."

Weprin and Assembly Election Law Committee Chair Eric Vitaliano, DC-Statens Island, sponsored the Comptroller

Financial Disclosure Bill that the Assembly passed recently.

Justin McCarthy, spokesman for Nozzolio, said the Senate is considering similar legislation. In addition, the Senate proposal would impose contribution limits, a measure not included in the Assembly bill.

McCarthy said the Assembly has been receptive to Senate suggestions and he expects that a compromise will be worked out this session.

The Board of Elections has ruled that because the Legislature will pick a successor to fill out the term of Comptroller Edward V. Regan, who is leaving after April 30, the race is not technically a political campaign. Therefore, the candidates are not required to file under state election law.

Nozzolio disagrees. "If it looks like a

campaign, raises money like a campaign, and spends like a campaign, chances are it probably is a political campaign.

Assemblyman Anthony J. Casale, RC-Mohawk, ranking minority member on the Election Law Committee, pointed out that some candidates for comptroller apparently are accepting and spending large amounts of money without any obligation whatsoever to make the details public.

In February, Regan announced he would be leaving his post. Candidates for the position include Carol Bellamy, H. Carl McCall, Fernando Ferrer, and Assembly members Joseph Lentol and Robin Schimminger.

Weprin said that some of the candidates have agreed to disclose fully their campaign finances.

Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol, D-

tion and spending limits on his candidacy.

Lentol said "slick media consultants, campaign buttons or lavish cocktail parties" are inappropriate methods for campaigning.

Nozzolio and Casale acknowledged the voluntary disclosure of two of the candidates, but voiced concern over the absence of any legal requirements to disclose.

"No candidate for public office should ever be above the law in regards to disclosing to the public their expenditures and who is contributing to their campaign," said Casale.

Weprin said he was working closely with Governor Cuomo on this and other election and campaign reforms. "With his support and leadership, I'm confident we can get these bills passed and signed into