



Gov. Jon Corzine Friday signed legislation that makes changes to current laws governing the activities of county political party committees.

The bill requires the committees to adopt constitutions and bylaws, calls for specific information concerning committee members to be filed with the county clerk, and eliminates fixed terms for committee members and chairs.

"This legislation is another step forward in our efforts to bring more transparency and ethics to government," Corzine said.

As a result of the legislation, constitutions and bylaws of each county committee are required to be posted on the organization's respective web site and copies of the documents must be provided to the county board of elections for web site display. In addition, anyone elected or appointed to membership on the county committee is entitled to receive a copy of the constitution or bylaws and that request must be filled within two days of receipt.

"This law is a reform of the party structure here in New Jersey," said Sen. Loretta Weinberg, (D-Bergen), a long-time advocate of open government and the Democratic lieutenant governor candidate. "As the prime sponsor of this bill, we designed it to ensure that there is an even playing field within party organizations with openness and due process."

Under the bill, S-930/A-1904, municipal clerks would be required to file an official list of committee members with the county clerk within 20 days after a committee's first meeting following the primary election. This list would be considered a government document available to the public upon request.

"This is a crucial step toward more accountability and transparency at every government level," said Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein (D-Middlesex/Mercer), a sponsor. "It's long overdue and a welcome addition to making government more open and accountable to the people."

In addition, procedures for removing committee officers who are unwilling or unable to serve, is required to be included in the organization's constitutions and bylaws. A member's resignation must be accompanied by a notarized letter of resignation signed by that committee member, or, if the resigning committee member fails to provide such a letter, by a notarized letter stating that the resignation has occurred. The chair of a county committee would have a continuing duty to report changes in the committee membership, with appropriate documentation, to the county clerk.

Harry Pozycki Chair of the Citizens' Campaign which developed the Party Democracy Act, said, "This law will ensure that county party committee people know the rules of the game, know who the players are, and guarantee they are able to vote their conscience when filling county and state legislative vacancies. It lays the foundation for the grassroots of the parties to decide who gets endorsed for major offices and to set the political parties' priorities on issues."

"This new law goes a long way in ending the era of 'top-down' political party rule," said Assemblywoman Charlotte Vandervalk, (R-Bergen), another sponsor. "It gives meaning to government by and for the people as it provides for increased citizen participation in the decision-making process of county political parties."

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