

OCTOBER 25, 2012 11:55 AM

JCOPE Reform For Legislative Pay Raise?

BY KEN LOVETT

The list of topics Gov. Cuomo wants to add to a special session keeps growing.

The latest idea he floated is reforming the much criticized Joint Commission on Public Ethics, which in some circles has been referred to not as JCOPE, but J-Joke.

Cuomo during an appearance on Albany radio this morning included potential changes to JCOPE along with campaign finance reform, a hike to the minimum wage and the decriminalization of small amounts of pot among the items he'd like to see addressed in a special session in exchange for an increase in state lawmaker and agency commissioner pay.

Cuomo has in recent week acknowledged the need for changes in how JCOPE runs. A big concern is the secrecy provision imposed on board members that keeps them from making any comments on investigations. That has prevented the body from even saying when a person has been cleared of an allegation brought to the commission.

With the Senate GOP in charge until at least the new year—depending on the outcome of next month's elections—Cuomo's best chance, according to insiders, appears to be changes to JCOPE and a minimum wage hike, even if Senate Republicans have spoken out against it. The thinking is after the election they could go along with a wage hike if they also got some type of tax break package for small businesses.

Many Senate Republicans continue to say they are not interested in a legislative pay raise. Historically, Republicans have taken that position publicly, while knowing privately there is enough support across the aisle to get it through. City and downstate lawmakers face far less consequences on the issue than upstate, legislative observers have noted.

TAGS:

gov. andrew cuomo JCOPE joint commission on public ethics senate republicans