



# Committee of Seventy

Clean and effective government. Fair elections. Informed citizens.

Eight Penn Center, 1628 JFK Boulevard, Suite 1002  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
(215) 557-3600, [www.seventy.org](http://www.seventy.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contacts: Zachary Stalberg  
President and CEO  
(215) 557-3600, ext. 106  
(267) 241-1628 (cell)**

## **COMMITTEE OF SEVENTY COMMENDS LEGISLATION TO REMOVE ELECTED OFFICIALS FROM “DROP”**

**PHILADELPHIA – February 25, 2010** – The Committee of Seventy commended 12 members of City Council for co-sponsoring legislation introduced today to exclude elected officials from participating in the city’s Deferred Retirement Option Plan (“DROP”). The legislation will not apply to any current member of City Council, six of whom are currently enrolled in DROP but are permitted to run for reelection as long as they retire for 24 hours before taking office again.

Legislation passed by the General Assembly in September 2009 requires counties across Pennsylvania to amend their DROP programs to bar the enrollment of elected officials. Counties were given 180 days – or until mid-March – to comply.

“Although it shouldn’t have taken the General Assembly to get elected officials out of DROP, what’s important is that the controversy will finally be resolved,” said Zachary Stalberg, Seventy’s President and CEO. “Future elected officials will know this is not a benefit they can count on.”

Stalberg praised Council members Bill Green, Maria Quiñones-Sánchez, Curtis Jones, Jr. and Jim Kenney for coming together to spearhead the legislation. Council did not act on two similar bills, the first introduced by Councilman Green in 2008 and the second introduced by Councilman Kenney in 2009. Council members Joan Krajewski, Jannie Blackwell and Bill Greenlee declined to co-sponsor today’s legislation. Council members Frank Rizzo and Brian O’Neill were out of town.

DROP allows long-tenured City employees to remain employed for up to four years after they cease receiving pension credits for their service and, in return, to receive a lump sum pension benefit payment when their employment ends. The Committee of Seventy has long argued that the DROP program – which was enacted in 1999 as an incentive to keep experienced employees on the jobs and to help with

succession planning – was not intended to apply to elected officials. Seventy was the only organization to testify at a May 2008 hearing on Councilman Green’s proposed bill.

According to Stalberg, the controversy over the enrollment of elected officials erupted when former City Solicitor Romulo L. Diaz permitted Councilwoman Joan Krajewski and City Commissioner Marge Tartaglione to run for reelection in November 2007, retire for 24 hours in January 2008 in order to receive their lump sum pension payment, and then return to work the following day. A number of elected officials, including the six DROP enrollees on City Council, entered the program after the Solicitor’s ruling. The ruling was affirmed by current City Solicitor Shelley Smith in April 2009 after a request for a review by the Committee of Seventy.

Stalberg said that Seventy did not criticize any elected official for enrolling in DROP or for already accepting DROP benefits since they were “following the rules that currently exist.” However, he added that DROP could still emerge as a 2011 campaign issue since current elected officials who are enrolled in the program would still be permitted to take advantage of the 24-hour retirement loophole.

The Committee of Seventy is a non-partisan organization fighting for clean and effective government, fair elections and informed citizens. See [www.seventy.org](http://www.seventy.org) for more Information.

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