

## Center for Judicial Accountability

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**From:** Center for Judicial Accountability <elena@judgewatch.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 07, 2016 4:26 PM  
**To:** mcilenti@nycbar.org  
**Cc:** ekocienda@nycbar.org  
**Subject:** Request for the City Bar's Amicus Curiae/Intervention & Other Assistance in Lawsuit Challenge to the Constitutionality & Lawfulness of NYS Budget  
**Attachments:** 3-28-16-press-release-letterhead.pdf

Dear Maria,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you about my request for the City Bar's *amicus curiae*/intervention and other assistance in CJA's citizen-taxpayer action, which – on behalf of the People of the State of New York and the public interest – challenges the constitutionality and lawfulness of the NYS budget. The whole of the case is posted on CJA's website, [www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org), accessible via the prominent hyperlink: "CJA's Citizen-Taxpayer Action to End NYS' Corrupt Budget 'Process' & Unconstitutional 'Three Men in a Room' Governance". Most important is our March 23, 2016 order to show cause for a preliminary injunction and verified second supplemental complaint. The direct link is here: <http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/searching-nys/budget/3-23-16-osc-2nd-supp-complaint.htm>.

As discussed, I have been unable to find any reports by the City Bar's Committee on State Affairs about the state budget subsequent to its 2003 report "*The New York State Budget Process and the Constitution: Defining and Protecting the 'Delicate Balance of Power'*", (58 The Record 345): [http://www.judgewatch.org/lawsuit-budget/law/58 The Record 345.pdf](http://www.judgewatch.org/lawsuit-budget/law/58%20The%20Record%20345.pdf) – which concerned the important budget cases of *Pataki v. Assembly & Senate* and *Silver v. Pataki*, then headed to the Court of Appeals. Is it possible that notwithstanding the Court of Appeals' splintered and controversial 2004 decision – and the ensuing budget reform activity, including attempts at constitutional amendments – there was no follow-up reports from the Committee on State Affairs about the state budget?

In 2007, the Committee on State Affairs released a report entitled "*Supporting Legislative Rules Reform: The Fundamentals*": [http://www.nycbar.org/pdf/report/Committee\\_on\\_State\\_Affairs.pdf](http://www.nycbar.org/pdf/report/Committee_on_State_Affairs.pdf), referencing the state budget, but mostly in passing. Primarily its 2007 report was focused on overhauling legislative rules vesting domineering powers in the leadership and its most noxious manifestation, the "three-men-in-a-room". The report highlighted the flawed legislation that results from a flawed legislative process – using the example of Chapter 63, Part K, of the Laws of 2005 which created the Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century – and identified that the Committee on State Affairs was intending to file an *amicus curiae* brief in one of the seven lawsuits that had been engendered by the Commission and the statute that gave rise to it.

The Committee on State Affairs did file an *amicus curiae* brief with the Court of Appeals, later that year: <http://www.judgewatch.org/judicial-compensation/mckinney-etc/mckinney-city-bar-amicus-brief.pdf> -- and its description of the statute and the "force of law" power it gave to the Commission's recommendations was extraordinary:

"a process of lawmaking never before seen in the State of New York" (at p. 24);

a "novel form of legislation...in direct conflict with representative democracy [that] cannot stand constitutional scrutiny (at p. 24)";

a "gross violation of the State Constitution's separation-of-powers and...the centuries-old constitutional mandate that the Legislature, and no other entity, make New York State's laws" (at p. 25);

“most unusual [in its]...self-executing mechanism by which recommendations formulated by an unelected commission automatically become law...without any legislative action” (at p. 28);

Unlike “any other known law” (at p. 29);

“a dangerous precedent” (at p. 11) that

“will set the stage for the arbitrary handling of public resources under the guise of future temporary commissions that are not subject to any public scrutiny or accountability” (at p. 36).

These quotes are featured in CJA’s citizen-taxpayer action, including at ¶1391 of our March 23, 2016 verified second supplemental complaint. This, because an even more egregious “force of law” provision is part of the “three-men-in-a-room” budget statute that created the Commission on Legislative, Judicial and Executive Compensation, Chapter 60, Part E, of the Laws of 2015 – which we are challenging.

It is most urgent that the City Bar’s Committee on State Affairs – which is now the Committee on Government Ethics and State Affairs – contact me, as soon as possible – as the Attorney General’s papers are due tomorrow – and my responding papers two weeks later.

Meantime, below is some of my outreach to scholars and “good-government” groups, further summarizing the issues presented by the case – and attaching the press release I sent out.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director  
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)  
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**From:** Center for Judicial Accountability [mailto:[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 30, 2016 4:51 PM  
**To:** 'zteachout@law.fordham.edu'; 'zteachout@gmail.com'  
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**Subject: "The Anti-Corruption Principle" -- & 3-men-in-a-room budget deal-making**

Dear Professor Teachout,

I would greatly appreciate your return call, as soon as possible, concerning the Center for Judicial Accountability’s legal challenge to New York’s corrupt three-men-in-a-room budget deal-making – the first ever.

Our cause of action challenging the constitutionality and lawfulness of three-men-in-a-room budget deal-making, as *unwritten and as applied*, cites to, and quotes from, your excellent law review article “*The Anti-Corruption Principle*” about how the founding fathers saw smallness as lending itself to corruption. It appears at ¶1466 of our March 23, 2016



verified second supplemental complaint, posted here: <http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/searching-nys/budget/3-23-16-osc-2nd-supp-complaint.htm> .

What is your opinion of our argument? And can you help in further developing this sixteenth cause of action, including by an *amicus curiae* brief?

In the hope of building dialogue as to that sixteenth cause of action – and developing effective corruption-fighting strategies among constitutional scholars, activists, and “good-government” types as to it and the other fifteen causes of action, I am furnishing this e-mail to the below recipients.

As the lawsuit is unfolding, with further papers from me due on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, I look forward to hearing from you – and them – soon.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director  
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**From:** Center for Judicial Accountability [<mailto:elena@judgewatch.org>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 30, 2016 12:54 PM  
**To:** 'eric.lane@hofstra.edu'  
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**Subject: Lawsuit challenge to the constitutionality & lawfulness of NYS' budget "process" -- including 3-men-in-a-room budget deal-making**

Dear Dean Lane,

Following up my phone messages for you at your law school office, I am pleased to inform you that your important 2010 law review article “*Albany’s Dysfunction Denies Due Process*” – about which I spoke with you nearly three years ago -- has now given rise to a legal challenge to the Legislature’s violations of legislative due process, including to its behind-closed-doors political conferences that substitute for debate and vote in committees and on the Senate and Assembly floor. Indeed, our March 23, 2016 verified second supplemental complaint (at ¶¶365, 423), addressed to the Legislature’s constitutional, statutory, and rule violations with respect to the budget for fiscal year 2016-2017, cites to, and quote from, your law review article. The webpage on which it is posted is here: <http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/searching-nys/budget/3-23-16-osc-2nd-supp-complaint.htm>.

Below is the March 28<sup>th</sup> e-mail I sent to the Brennan Center and other “good-government” groups – highlighting the lawsuit’s challenge to “three-men-in-a-room” budget deal-making and requesting their comments, suggestions, *amicus curiae* participation and/or intervention.

Please call me, at your earliest convenience, following your review of the verified second supplemental complaint – and, in particular:

- (1) its 12th cause of action (at pp. 36-53) “Nothing Lawful or Constitutional Can Emerge From a Legislative Process that Violates its Own Statutory & Rule Safeguards – and the Constitution”;

(2) its [13th cause of action](#) (at pp. 53-67) “Chapter 60, Part E of the Laws of 2015 [creating the Commission on Legislative, Judicial and Executive Compensation] is Unconstitutional, *As Written...*”, particularly its Parts D & E (at pp. 60-67); and

(3) its [16th cause of action](#) (at pp. 80-85) “Three-Men-in-a-Room Budget Deal-Making is Unconstitutional, *as Unwritten and as Applied*” .

Indeed, I am most eager to understand from you – a preeminent scholar of the Constitution and legislative process – how the budget “process”, as it has devolved over the years, including after the 2004 Court of Appeals decision in *Pataki v. Assembly & Senate/Silver v. Pataki*, is anything but the most brazen repudiation of the constitutional design laid out in Article VII, §§1-7 of the New York State Constitution.

To foster dialogue as to this important [threshold](#) question – and vindicating the public’s trampled rights – a copy of this e-mail is being sent to the Brennan Center and the other “good-government” groups.

Thank you.

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**From:** Center for Judicial Accountability [<mailto:elena@judgewatch.org>]

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**To:** 'Blair Horner ([bhorner@nypirg.org](mailto:bhorner@nypirg.org))'; 'Blair Horner ([Hhorner106@gmail.com](mailto:Hhorner106@gmail.com))'; 'lawrence.norden@nyu.edu'; 'denora.getachew@nyu.edu'; 'Barbara Bartoletti ([bbheck1@yahoo.com](mailto:bbheck1@yahoo.com))'; 'lwwny@lwwny.org'; 'Susan Lerner ([slerner@commoncause.org](mailto:slerner@commoncause.org))'; 'pkatze@commoncause.org'; ([ddadey@citizensunion.org](mailto:ddadey@citizensunion.org)); ([rfauss@citizensunion.org](mailto:rfauss@citizensunion.org)); 'twerber@citizensunion.org'; 'jkaehny@reinventalbany.org'

**Subject: Lawsuit challenge to the constitutionality & lawfulness of NYS' budget "process" -- including 3-men-in-a-room budget deal-making**

Dear Blair, Larry, Barbara, Susan, Dick, and John,

This follows up my phone calls and voice mail messages, advising that our nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens’ organization, Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA,) has brought what appears to be the first-ever legal challenge to the constitutionality of “three-men-in-a-room” budget deal-making.

As most of you know, for the past two years, CJA has been litigating a citizen-taxpayer action, on behalf of the People of the State of New York and public interest, challenging the constitutionality and lawfulness of the judiciary and legislative budgets for fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 and the Governor’s budget bills embracing them. Last Wednesday, March 23, 2016, we brought an order to show cause to expand the citizen-taxpayer action to fiscal year 2016-2017, setting forth the facts and law by a verified second supplemental complaint. Its sixteenth cause of action challenges the constitutionality of “three-men-in-a-room” budget deal-making, *as unwritten and as applied.*

CJA’s website, [www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org), posts the record of the entire two years of litigation in the case. It is accessible from our prominent homepage link: “CJA’s Citizen-Taxpayer Action to End NYS’ Corrupt Budget ‘Process’ & Unconstitutional ‘Three Men in a Room’ Governance”. For your convenience, here’s the direct link to the March 23, 2016 verified second supplemental complaint: <http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/searching-nys/budget/3-23-16-osc-2nd-supp-complaint.htm> .

We would greatly benefit from your comments and suggestions – and not only with respect to the sixteenth cause of action, but with respect to the other fifteen causes of action. Indeed, as the cause of good government would best be



served by your *amicus curiae* assistance/intervention in the citizen-taxpayer action, I respectfully ask that you deem this e-mail my request for same.

Meantime, attached is the press release I have begun to circulate. Kindly bring it to the attention of your many media contacts – and, in the case of Citizens Union, which has its own in-house “Gotham Gazette”, that it be submitted for coverage. In any event, I trust you will have no objection if I invite such members of the media who contact me in response to the press release to contact you for further informed comment about the case.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director  
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