

New Jersey Senate Republicans

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February 20, 2014

The Hon. Senator Loretta Weinberg
Senate Democrat Office
P.O. Box 099
Trenton, NJ, 08625-0099

The Hon. Assemblyman John Wisniewski
Assembly Democrat Office
P.O. Box 098
Trenton, NJ, 08625-0099

Dear Honorable Colleagues:

This letter is my formal request to you, in your respective roles of Chairman and Chairwoman of the “New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation,” to have the Select Committee launch a thorough inquiry and fact-finding mission to uncover how The City of Newark’s former Mayor and Council have spent the people’s federal, state and local tax dollars.

You may be aware that the New Jersey Comptroller’s Office has just released a report about a costly and disturbing abuse of government power and tax dollars, as well as a general lack of oversight to how the people’s money was squandered under Newark’s former Mayor and Council. Political allies, friends and husbands were collecting millions of public dollars under the former Mayor and Council, in the form of checks an executive wrote to herself, illegitimate severance payments and no bid contracts.

There was also a potential attempt to cover-up an abuse of government power, as this particular problematic Newark organization had an emergency meeting to dissolve in March 2013 during the peak of the Comptroller’s investigation. This Comptroller report, dated February 19, 2014 is enclosed.

A December 3, 2013 Comptroller’s Office report details the office’s three-year audit of Newark’s books, which uncovered abuses of taxpayer dollars and negligence by local officials. That report is also enclosed.

These are just two examples in a long history of public finance and leadership issues that have plagued New Jersey's largest city, which as a municipality gets some \$100 million per year from taxpayers across our state, in addition to federal grants and local tax dollars.

While the Comptroller's Office has referred some of its findings to authorities, which may choose to conduct a criminal investigation, there is clearly a real danger of widespread abuse of government power, widespread abuse of tax dollars and cover-ups of such abuses in The City of Newark.

Under the Mayor and Council, what other friends or political allies got to write themselves checks out of public coffers? What other no-bid contracts have been facilitated in the City? Who else has received illegitimate or unlawful payments?

These are just a few of the many questions that must be answered and many important facts to uncover in order for the state to enact proper reforms and oversight measures so abuses, such as those uncovered in the Feb. 19 Comptroller report and others we may find, do not happen again under any Mayor or Council.

The joint legislative committee that we all established to be nonpartisan and that you head can immediately conduct this much-needed inquiry and fact-finding into the City of Newark. Specifically, the Select Committee is empowered to investigate any matter "raising concerns about abuse of government power or an attempt to conceal an abuse of government power" over the next two years. Just as other legislative committees address many different matters during a legislative session, this committee can investigate how New Jersey's largest city has been wasting millions of dollars from taxpayers all across this state.

I implore you to consider using this committee to its full potential for the taxpayers of New Jersey, and I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samuel P. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Samuel Thompson

CC: Hon. Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney;
Hon. Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto;
Reid Schar, Esq.;

Hon. "Select Committee" members: Assemblywoman Marlene Caride,
Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll,

Senator Nia H. Gill,
Senator Linda R. Greenstein,
Assemblyman Louis D. Greenwald,
Assemblywoman Amy H. Handlin,
Senator Kevin J. O'Toole,
Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi,
Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle,
Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman