

June 20, 2007
The Advocate

Senate approves trio of ethics bills

The Louisiana Senate on Tuesday approved three bills aimed at improving the state's national image when it comes to governmental ethics.

The bills are part of the legislative package of LA Ethics 1 — a statewide coalition of business and public interest groups.

The Senate-approved bills dealt with whistleblower protections, education in ethics laws and banning outside employment by the state's ethics chief.

The big bill in the package requiring personal financial disclosure by legislators and other elected officials is scheduled for a Senate vote today.

“Three down and one to go. Today was a good day,” said Stephen Moret, a coalition leader.

The Senate gave final legislative approval to House Bill 340 by Rep. Bodi White, R-Central, which requires posting of state whistleblower laws at government work-sites. The bill is on its way to the governor's desk.

Two other House bills are on their way back to the House for approval of Senate changes. They are:

- House Bill 532 by Rep. William Daniel, R-Baton Rouge, which bans the Louisiana Board of Ethics administrator and general counsel from having a second private sector job. Ethics chief Gray Sexton is a lawyer who has a private practice. The Senate moved up the date that Sexton would have to divorce himself of outside employment from August 2008 to Jan. 1.
- House Bill 493 by Rep. Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge, that would require education and training of elected officials and government employees in state conflict-of-interest laws. The House-passed version required immediate training for all while the Senate adopted a phase-in plan starting with legislators, statewide elected officials and Public Service Commissioners beginning in 2008.

(Marsha Shuler)