

teacher, you don't get invited to the birthday parties. So I grew up and became a senator and Chairman of the Legislative Committee on Ethical Standards. You know, maybe we need a committee on ethical standards. It's no place to win a popularity contest. Your colleagues think you are an antagonist and the public suspects you are covering up. Even the perception that you are somehow judging your peers is damaging to personal and professional relationships you attempt to build as a legislator. I didn't do it for four years and was delighted...oh, I did do it for four years and was delighted to turn the job over to another senator in 1990, but I continue to believe strongly that the respect and confidence of the people is an essential ingredient of representative form of government, therefore, public officials must avoid conduct that is in violation of their public trust or that creates a justifiable impression upon the public that such trust is being violated. Although it has been said that integrity has no need of rules, I believe that persons serving in public positions want and need specific statutory guidelines and directions on which to base their decisions. The unenviable role of the Ethics chairman member is to interpret these guidelines in a sensitive manner at the request of either the legislator or a member of the public. The bulk of the work of the Ethics Committee is giving advisory opinions a Legislature wants to know. Can I sell this property to the state? As the only one with the equipment can I take a no bid contract to plow the streets? Can my legislative aide take this or that appointment? The committee and its counsel meet and discuss the application of the code of ethics, the conflict of interests law and any other statute pertinent to the question at hand. A decision is reached and an opinion is given. New Jersey's Joint Committee on Ethical Standards is a bipartisan panel made up of four senators and four assembly members. Traditionally, a senator of the majority party is the chair and the vice-chair is an assembly member of the other party.

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR LANGFORD: The even number and the political balance of this committee mean that every decision must be nonpartisan. I, however, have a serious question about this type of peer review and would like to see an Ethics Committee of former legislators and private citizens. It is difficult to criticize a fellow legislator unless he or she is so far off base as to make everyone else look bad. I favor a commission of members from