



City Council Ethics Chair Forces Procedural Vote on Stalled Protections for Inspector General Investigations

Description

Ald. Matt Martin (47th Ward), chair of the City Council ethics committee, filed a [procedural motion](#) last week to reclaim a stalled ordinance from the rules committee. If successful, Martin's motion would reassign the ordinance to his committee, where as chair he has the authority to schedule it for debate and a vote.

At issue is [a measure](#) that would strengthen the city's Office of Inspector General by curtailing Department of Law practices that, according to Inspector General Deborah Witzburg, negatively impact the effectiveness, independence, and pace of OIG investigative work. • Introduced in February by Martin, the ordinance was banished to the rules committee by allies of Mayor Brandon Johnson.

The rules committee has historically served as a holding pen and frequently a graveyard for ordinances, with items held at the discretion of the mayor and loyal committee chairs. Increasingly independent alderpersons have made more frequent use under Johnson of the council's Rule 41, which among other policies allows for a vote to discharge items from the rules committee after 60 days of inaction. Martin's motion is one of five Rule 41 filings for June's regular session of the City Council.

The Johnson administration has made it clear through both action and inaction that governmental ethics and oversight are not legislative priorities, • said Bryan Zarou, the Better Government Association's Vice President of Policy. It's time for City Council to chart its own course. •

Mayoral allies previously fought to obstruct a proposed ordinance enabling the enforcement of a 2011 Rahm Emanuel executive order banning lobbyist contributions to a sitting mayor, and other ethics reforms measures introduced during Johnson's term have idled for years in committee.

This is a common-sense measure recommended by the city's Inspector General that would move Chicago more into line with nationally recognized best practices, • said Zarou. We are grateful to Alderperson Martin for taking a stand and moving to advance ethics in Chicago's government. •

The Better Government Association is a 101-year-old civic watchdog that seeks better government through investigative journalism, policy reforms and civic engagement efforts that lead to more open, equitable and accountable government. The policy team and investigative unit operate independently of one another, while both seek to advance the cause of better government in Chicago and across Illinois.