

**INEZ E. DICKENS**  
ASSISTANT DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER  
9<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, MANHATTAN

**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
163 WEST 125TH STREET, SUITE 729  
NEW YORK, NY 10027  
TEL: (212) 678-4505  
FAX: (212) 864-4379

**CITY HALL OFFICE**  
250 BROADWAY, ROOM 1875  
NEW YORK, NY 10007  
TEL: (212) 788-7397  
FAX: (212) 442-2732



**THE COUNCIL  
OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**CHAIR**  
STANDARDS & ETHICS

**COMMITTEES**  
LAND USE  
HEALTH  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS  
GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS  
RULES, PRIVILEGES & ELECTIONS

**SUB COMMITTEES**  
PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS & CONCESSIONS

**CO-CHAIR**  
CITYWIDE TASK FORCE ON  
FINACIALLY-DISTRESSED RENTAL HOUSING

March 11, 2013

Susan Lerner  
Common Cause  
74 Trinity Place, Suite 901  
New York, NY 10006

Erin Markman  
Human Rights Project  
123 William Street  
16th Floor  
New York, NY 10038

Dear Ms. Lerner and Ms. Markman:

Thank you for your letter regarding the legislative processes that govern the City Council. I have proudly worked beside our Speaker to enact reforms that have brought accountability to the body and increased the level of participation and the effectiveness of the advocacy of individual members.

Alongside the Speaker, I have demonstrated a commitment to improving our body. As the Chair of the Ethics Committee, I can speak with some degree of authority about the importance and function of rules within the Council. Though the treatment of "an orderly legislative process" was somewhat cursory in your letter, there is a critical and dynamic tension between elements of the reforms that you propose and the ability to maintain a productive legislative body. As Governor Cuomo has oft remarked, "Government is supposed to function, it is not a debating society." I think the participants in our democracy would agree that the ideal is a productive and accountable government that delivers for New Yorkers, but does so while protecting the right of all its citizens to participate. I believe that is a goal to which we can all aspire and one for which I am willing to work.

To that end, I would be a willing participant in discussions that continue the trajectory of my own efforts to strengthen the productivity, accountability, and fairness within the Council. While the correct forum for those discussions would need to be determined, there are two points that are critical to ensure that we achieve the most fair and equitable set of reforms. First, a discussion of reform would need to include a



wide variety of stakeholders. Common Cause is one voice for reform in New York, but it is certainly not the only voice. Though it may be logistically challenging, all voices, particularly those in underserved communities, would need to be included.

Additionally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge what to many has been a remarkable historical coincidence of timing between the increased fervor of reform/good government organizations and the ascension of non-traditional leaders to positions of power. J. Raymond Jones' ascension to the Manhattan County Leadership, the David Dinkins Mayoralty, and the leadership for the New York State Senate in 2009 are just a few historical points of reference. Any discussion that I participate in regarding rules reform must occur with this context as its backdrop. The same standards and expectations that applied in the evaluations of previous prospective Speaker candidates would need to be applied in this instance as well.

I stand on my record of bringing fairness and accountability to the New York City Council. I remain committed to a process that balances the needs of a productive City Council, with one that embraces the best in democratic principles. And look forward to working with all stakeholders to perfect our Council.

Sincerely,



Inez E. Dickens  
Assistant Deputy Majority Leader