

STATE OF NEW YORK

164

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 6, 2021

Introduced by Sens. GIANARIS, BROOKS, HOYLMAN, KAMINSKY, KRUEGER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Ethics and Internal Governance

AN ACT to amend the public officers law, in relation to prohibiting reimbursement of campaign committees and legal defense funds for defense costs incurred on behalf of state employees

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Subdivision 2 of section 19 of the public officers law, as
2 amended by chapter 769 of the laws of 1985, is amended to read as
3 follows:

4 2. (a) Upon compliance by the employee with the provisions of subdivi-
5 sion three of this section, and subject to the restrictions set forth in
6 paragraph (b) of this subdivision and the conditions set forth in para-
7 graph [~~(b)~~] (c) of this subdivision, it shall be the duty of the state
8 to pay reasonable attorneys' fees and litigation expenses incurred by or
9 on behalf of an employee in his or her defense of a criminal proceeding
10 in a state or federal court arising out of any act which occurred while
11 such employee was acting within the scope of his public employment or
12 duties upon his acquittal or upon the dismissal of the criminal charges
13 against him or reasonable attorneys' fees incurred in connection with an
14 appearance before a grand jury which returns no true bill against the
15 employee where such appearance was required as a result of any act which
16 occurred while such employee was acting within the scope of his public
17 employment or duties unless such appearance occurs in the normal course
18 of the public employment or duties of such employee.

19 (b) No reimbursement shall be paid pursuant to this section to any
20 campaign or political committee, or legal defense fund which pays all or
21 any portion of an employees' reasonable attorneys' fees and/or liti-
22 gation expenses. Furthermore, an employee on whose behalf a legal

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 defense fund or legal defense funds have been established, shall not be
2 eligible for reimbursement pursuant to this section until all moneys in
3 such fund or funds have been expended for the employees' reasonable
4 attorneys' fees and/or litigation expenses.

5 (c) Upon the application for reimbursement for reasonable attorneys'
6 fees or litigation expenses or both made by or on behalf of an employee
7 as provided in subdivision three of this section, the attorney general
8 shall determine, based upon his investigation and his review of the
9 facts and circumstances, whether such reimbursement shall be paid. The
10 attorney general shall notify the employee in writing of such determi-
11 nation. Upon determining that such reimbursement should be provided, the
12 attorney general shall so certify to the comptroller. Upon such certif-
13 ication, reimbursement shall be made for such fees or expenses or both
14 upon the audit and warrant of the comptroller. On or before January
15 fifteenth the comptroller, in consultation with the department of law
16 and other agencies as may be appropriate, shall submit to the governor
17 and the legislature an annual accounting of judgments, settlements,
18 fees, and litigation expenses paid pursuant to this section during the
19 preceding and current fiscal years. Such accounting shall include, but
20 not be limited to the number, type and amount of claims so paid, as well
21 as an estimate of claims to be paid during the remainder of the current
22 fiscal year and during the following fiscal year. Any dispute with
23 regard to entitlement to reimbursement or the amount of litigation
24 expenses or the reasonableness of attorneys' fees shall be resolved by a
25 court of competent jurisdiction upon appropriate motion or by way of a
26 special proceeding.

27 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.