

# The Journal News

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## Lax oversight, Albany culture blamed for stream of onetime legislators running afoul of law

By JOSEPH SPECTOR, Albany Bureau Chief

ALBANY — Former Queens state Sen. Seymour Lachman says he has a photo in his office of the state Senate from the early 2000s.

Of the 62 members in the portrait, at least a dozen have been arrested, convicted or left office under a cloud. And the list seems to grow each year.

“It’s unbelievable,” said Lachman, a Wagner College professor and author of “Three Men In A Room,” a 2006 book that’s critical of the Legislature.

The state Legislature’s approval has grown over the past year under Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s stewardship, polls have shown.

But the parade of current and former state lawmakers in legal trouble is seemingly an endless stream.

New York is far from unique in that regard, but former and current state lawmakers said a mix of arrogance, the Albany culture, lax ethics oversight and the power of legislative leaders have offered opportunities for misdeeds.

“Too many people go down there maybe with the right intentions, but then that changes over the years and all of sudden they’re there to try and make their own lives better and make money,” said former Assemblyman David Koon, D-Monroe County, who served 15 years before losing re-election in 2010.

The latest troubled politician is former state Sen. Nick Spano, R-Yonkers. The Westchester County powerbroker pleaded guilty Feb. 10 to federal tax evasion, admitting he underreported his outside income during part of his 20 years in the Senate.

After his arrest, Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said, “Spano is the latest in a regrettably long line of lawmakers turned lawbreakers.”

A report last year by Citizens Union, a good-government group, found that 17 state legislators either left office or lost their seat due to ethical and criminal issues between 1999 and 2010.

The report is already stale.

Sen. Carl Kruger, D-Brooklyn, resigned in December in a teary plea deal in which he admitted accepting \$1 million in bribes. He faces nine to 11 years in prison.

Assemblyman William Boyland Jr., D-Brooklyn, pleaded not guilty last month in a federal bribery case. That’s after he was acquitted in November on similar charges.