

surrenders

B'klyn lawmaker is latest pol charged with corruption

Brooklyn state Sen. John Sampson joined a growing list of New York politicians caught up in scandal as prosecutors yesterday accused him of embezzling \$440,000 to finance a run for Brooklyn district attorney, and recruiting a mole in the U.S. attorney's office to try to thwart a federal probe.

Sampson, 47, a Democrat and former Senate Ethics Committee chairman, allegedly looted the money from escrow accounts he oversaw as a court-appointed referee, threatened to "take out" informants, and told FBI agents who accused him of lying that "not everything I told you was false."

The indictment in Brooklyn federal court followed the government's disclosure on Friday that former state Sen. Shirley Huntley (D-Queens) last summer secretly recorded meetings with seven elected officials, in-

cluding an unidentified senator who talked about a Kennedy Airport bribery scheme.

Loretta E. Lynch, the United States attorney in Brooklyn, said yesterday's charges did not flow out of those recordings, and declined to comment on reports that Sampson was the unnamed senator.

But she said corruption probes are continuing, and the behavior of elected officials is making the public "cynical."

"The voters of New York rightfully expect their elected officials to represent the voters' interest, not to trade on their positions of power to line their own pockets," she told reporters at a news conference.

Sampson turned himself in to the FBI yesterday morning and later pleaded not guilty.

His lawyer Zachary Carter blasted prosecutors, charging that disclosure of Huntley's taping for the FBI had unfairly created expectations that Sampson would be

charged with public corruption, instead of just embezzlement and obstruction of justice.

"There's a difference between corruption and ordinary crimes charged against people who happen to be public officials," Carter said. "The senator does not stand accused of any offenses that implicate the misuse of his office."

Carter would not say whether Sampson was the senator Huntley recorded.

Elected in 1996 to represent Canarsie, the apex of Sampson's power came in 2009 and 2010, when he headed the Democratic conference while the party controlled the Senate.

He promised with co-leaders Sen. Malcolm Smith and Sen. Pedro Espada to "restore faith" in the Senate. All three have been indicted or convicted of crimes.

Senate Democrats stripped Sampson of his position as ranking minority member on the Judiciary and Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Committees. (NEWSDAY)

NYers tiring of political scandals

BY IVAN PEREIRA
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The recent indictments of several New York elected officials have some Gothamites throwing their hands up at the entire political system.

Between the scandals, such as yesterday's arrest of state Sen. John Sampson, and the level of partisanship in the governing bodies at all levels, New Yorkers say they've had enough.

"I can barely turn on the television when I get up in the morning without wanting to bile," said Charles Mark, 25, an NYU graduate student from Bushwick.

That disgust, however, will just continue to fuel the corruption if it's not channeled in the right direction,

political activist groups said.

Russ Haven, the legislative counsel for the New York Public Interest Research Group, said he is concerned about the growing number of corruption probes among state leaders and that voting is the best medicine to cure the disease.

"Now's the time for New Yorkers to double down and have their elected officials clean things up," he said.

Ashton Stewart, the executive director for the New York City League of Women Voters, added that New Yorkers should also push for campaign finance and ethics reform laws.

That so much money is up for grabs with little transparency leads more elected officials down the path to unethical behavior, according to Stewart.

"We feel it is part of the current state of Albany. If there was more openness oversight there will be less chances of cheating the system," he said.

Riley O'Neill, an NYU student from Long Island City, said that he's grown up with so many examples of pols behaving badly that it's going to take a major overhaul for him to trust elected officials.

"I think it's been a long time of them not representing the people, especially with Washington," he said. "How it's working right now, it just doesn't work."

(WITH ANNA SANDERS)

EDITORIAL

New York's hall of shame grows larger **Page 10**

Here's 1 thing Tebow's good at: influence

Unsigned free agent and former Jets quarterback Tim Tebow was named the most influential athlete in America by Forbes yesterday, though few teams have shown interest in the Christian icon.

In a Nielsen and E-Poll Market Research poll, 29% of respondents said Tebow was "influential." Though Tebow was cut from the Jets last week, his openly Christian beliefs and skill on the field contribute to his popularity, according to the Forbes analysis.

Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter also made the

list, as the fourth most influential athlete, though he's still in rehab after breaking his ankle during playoffs in October. Jeter

hasn't hit the field yet this season, but Forbes maintains he's still a legend in the minds of most Americans. (ANNA SANDERS)



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Forbes' 2013 Most Influential Athletes

1. **TIM TEBOW**
Ex-Jet
2. **MICHAEL PHELPS**
Olympic gold-medalist swimmer
3. **USAIN BOLT**
Fastest man in the world
4. **DEREK JETER**
New York Yankees
5. **PEYTON MANNING**
Denver Broncos

No booze at future Denny's home downtown

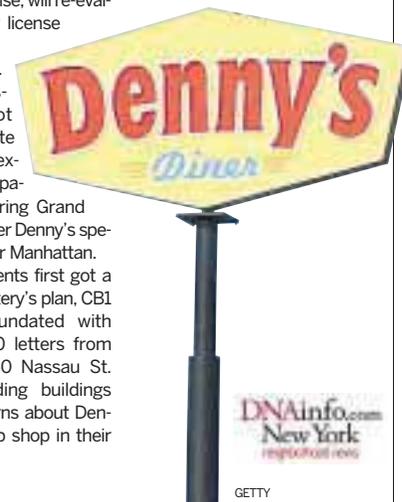
Cheap-eats chain Denny's is moving ahead with its controversial plan to open its first NYC outpost in a luxury condo building downtown, but booze won't be on the menu — for now.

"America's Diner," which has leased the ground-floor spot at 150 Nassau St. — a swanky landmarked building that sits across the street from City Hall — withdrew its bid for a beer and wine license from Community Board 1, a company spokesman confirmed.

The spokesman said the restaurant, which has set off a firestorm of complaints from the residents of the

24-story high rise, will re-evaluate its liquor license bid once the location opens. The spokesman did not have an update about when exactly the company plans to bring Grand Slams and other Denny's specialties to lower Manhattan.

Since residents first got a whiff of the eatery's plan, CB1 has been inundated with more than 50 letters from tenants of 150 Nassau St. and surrounding buildings voicing concerns about Denny's setting up shop in their neighborhood.



GETTY

Men can now get Viagra online with doc's Rx

Men, you don't need to be embarrassed anymore when buying Viagra.

Men with erectile dysfunction can now fill prescriptions for the drug online, Pfizer said yesterday.

The new home delivery service, run by CVS pharmacy, targets a rising online market of consumers looking for prescription meds who might otherwise buy counterfeit Viagra online.

"By offering men with ED convenient access and a legitimate alternative to purchase Viagra online, our hope is that Pfizer will help rein in the distribu-



Pfizer hopes to rein in sales of fake ED products.

tion of fake ED products," said Victor Clavelli, a Pfizer marketing official.

There are nearly 24 million searches for Viagra online every year, Clavelli said. Most of the pills sold from online pharma-

cies are counterfeit and contain less of the active ingredient used in Viagra.

Only 3% of online sellers are potentially legitimate, according to a review by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.

"We've seen how fake pharmacy websites can lure consumers into buying counterfeit medicines with what seems to be an easy purchasing experience, but it may be putting their health at risk," the association's executive director, Carmen Catizone, said in a statement.

(ANNA SANDERS)