

AG nominee clears Senate panel, vows corruption fight

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TRENTON, N.J. -- A former federal prosecutor who is in line to become the state's chief law enforcement officer told lawmakers Monday that most corrupt politicians should serve mandatory prison time.

The Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously released Stuart Rabner's nomination as attorney general to the full Senate. A confirmation vote is expected Sept. 25.

In contrast to his predecessor, Rabner said he would support mandatory prison for government corruption.

"Public officials who betray the public trust should go to jail," said Rabner, who has been Gov. Jon S. Corzine's chief counsel since January and is the former head of the criminal division for the U.S. Attorney's office in Newark.

He said criminal sentences require people to serve 85 percent of a sentence and suggested the same standard for white-collar crime.

"It would be real time that would be served," Rabner said.

Rabner asked lawmakers to consider lesser sentences for public officials who cooperate in investigations and allowing judges to deliver lesser sentences in extraordinary cases.

Sen. John Adler, the committee chairman, said those exceptions seemed reasonable and lawmakers would amend bills that passed committee earlier this year but stalled amid opposition from former Attorney General Zulima Farber.

Adler, D-Camden, said corruption has made the state "an embarrassment nationally" and hoped Rabner could combat that reputation.

Rabner, 46, was nominated by Corzine to replace Farber, who resigned in August after an independent review found she broke state ethics rules by intervening in a traffic stop for her boyfriend.

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