

The Trials of John Sampson and Thomas Libous: [What Comes Next?](#)

What the convictions of two NYS Senators tell us about the state of corruption in Albany and what may be in store for other indicted lawmakers

This July, two high-ranking New York State Senators faced trials for public corruption. Both were found guilty. Just the most recent in a long list of recent corruption scandals, the details of their cases provide a window into the culture of impunity in Albany.



Who is John Sampson? - John Sampson (right photo) is a New York State Senator, representing parts of Brooklyn. Sampson led the Senate's Democratic Conference from 2009 to 2012. He previously served as Chair of the Senate Ethics Committee and the Senate Administrative Regulations Review Commission.

What were the allegations? - While serving as a state senator, Sampson allegedly embezzled proceeds in excess of \$400,000 from two foreclosures in 1998 and 2002 that he was overseeing as a court-appointed monitor. Sampson [purportedly used these funds](#) in his unsuccessful 2005 campaign for the Kings County District Attorney's Office. The statute of limitations for charging this conduct has expired. This summer, Sampson faced trial in an eight-count indictment, including concealment of records and obstruction of justice, for his attempts to cover up the embezzlement.

The background of these charges is that in 2006, Sampson solicited \$200,000 from a real-estate developer in order to pay back some of the previously embezzled funds in exchange for the promise of future political favors. When the developer was later arrested on charges of mortgage fraud, Sampson approached a friend who worked as a paralegal in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and asked for a list of any cooperating witnesses implicating Sampson in the pay off so that he could ["take them out."](#)

Sampson was also charged with lying to federal investigators in an unrelated incident. Sampson allegedly asked a member of his staff to intervene with tax officials on behalf of a liquor store in which Sampson had a secret ownership interest. Sampson [later denied the intervention](#) when interviewed by the FBI.

On July 24, Sampson was [found guilty on three counts](#) of obstructing justice and lying to the FBI.

Who is Thomas Libous? - Thomas Libous (left photo) is a New York State Senator, representing Broome, Tioga, Chenango, and Delaware counties. Libous is serving his fourteenth term in the Senate and is currently the Deputy Majority Leader.

What were the allegations? - Libous was accused of using his position as the second-highest ranking Republican Senator to obtain a job for his son. In 2010, a federal grand jury opened an inquiry into allegations that Libous had obtained a job for his son, Matthew Libous, at the Westchester law firm of Santangelo, Randazz & Mangone by pledging to direct public business to the firm. Libous also allegedly arranged for the Albany lobbying firm of Ostroff, Hiffa & Associates to bear a portion of his son's salary and the cost of his Range Rover. When interviewed by federal investigators about these issues, Libous [denied any knowledge of how his son came to be employed by the law firm](#). Libous is currently on trial, facing one count of making false statements to federal investigators. Libous's son was recently found guilty of tax fraud and was sentenced to six months in prison.

On July 22, Libous was [convicted of lying to the FBI](#).

This all seems very familiar... - Since 2000, [numerous New York State legislators have been forced from office for corruption](#) or ethical misconduct.⁵ The convictions of Sampson and Libous, which add to that number, are indicative of the longstanding integrity deficit in Albany. This year's high-profile indictments of former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos sparked outrage and demonstrated that self-dealing has superseded the interests of the public at the highest levels of state government.

Why are these particular cases important? - First, if convicted, Libous and Sampson would be the highest-ranking state legislators found guilty of corruption in recent memory. Second, the Libous case bears a striking resemblance to the charges against Dean Skelos, so Skelos's legal team will be watching closely to see how the jury reacts to a politician selling favors to benefit his son instead of himself. Finally, the Libous and Sampson jury verdicts may open a window into the public's opinion of corrupt officials using their public positions for private gain.