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## Plan would bring Board of Review out of shadows

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**BY STEVE PATTERSON** Staff Reporter

For years, the county panel responsible for considering whether to lower property taxes -- for businesses and homeowners alike -- has operated in obscurity, known primarily by attorneys filing appeals.

Next month, the Cook County Board will be asked to shine greater light on that body and limit the influence of attorneys appearing before it.

Board of Review Commissioners Joseph Berrios, Larry Rogers Jr. and Brendan Houlihan would be limited in the amount of campaign contributions they can accept from tax-appeal attorneys regularly asking them to lower taxes, according to an ethics ordinance set to be introduced.

The board also would be required to post all appeal information -- including the attorney filing the appeal -- on its Web site, available to be searched by address.

### 'We ought to know'

The campaign donation limits -- \$1,500 in non-campaign years and \$3,000 in campaign years -- would apply to anyone doing more than \$10,000 in property-tax appeal business a year. The rules would also apply to Cook County Assessor James Houlihan.

It would bring balance to rules for all county officials.

But the moves being pushed by County Commissioners Mike Quigley, Liz Gorman, Gregg Goslin and Peter Silvestri are clearly aimed at the Board of Review and its long-standing reputation for insider dealings.

"We ought to know if people are getting tax breaks because of clout," Quigley said.

Rogers, who campaigned for Brendan Houlihan last year on a drive to reform the board, said he supports "anything that instills the public's trust in government," while Brendan Houlihan said he wants to see more "transparency and accountability."

Berrios said while he's receptive to change, the plan is "very vague" and includes no system for how to track which attorneys have done \$10,000 in business.

James Houlihan spokesman Lucio Guerrero expressed similar concerns about implementation, but said he supports moves that "let more people know what we do."