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November 15, 2010

Ms. Jean Bennett
Auburn Citizen
25 Dill Street
Auburn, New York 13021

To The Editor:

Thank you for your editorial in which you support my legislation (S.3149-Diaz/A.4704-Ball) to ban legislators' outside income (Our View: Outlawing state legislators outside income a good idea). In response to your statement that "we haven't found much for which to praise state Sen. Ruben Diaz, Sr.," I would like to offer the following comments.

If your only concerns are gay marriage and abortion, then your statement bears some merit. I oppose gay marriage and I oppose abortion, and I always will.

If on the other hand, you are concerned about New York State's current \$300 Million budget gap and looming **\$9 Billion** budget deficit, then I offer the following bills which I sponsor for your consideration:

1) S.1645A and S.6210A- which creates a voluntary Canadian Prescription Drug Program for participants in the Elderly Pharmaceutical Prescription Drug Program (EPIC) and for New York State Civil Service Employees and Retirees. These bills are modeled after the successful program that currently operates in Schenectady County, which has saved approximately \$ 9.5 Million since the inception of the program in 2005. 90% of all eligible county employees now participate in this program. If the smallest county in New York State has managed to save \$9.5 Million, just imagine what New York State could save.

2) S.2550A - which requires issuers of credit cards and debit cards to pay and collect sales and use taxes directly to the Commissioner of Taxation and Finance. Approximately \$500,000 Million would be returned to the New York State Treasury through this bill.

3) S.6209 - which establishes the New York State Seniors Trust Fund. This bill creates a tax check off on State Income Taxes and would provide much needed additional funding for home delivered meals for Senior Citizens.

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4) S.6236A - this bill imposes a 50% tax on all benefits received by companies in New York State who take out life insurance policies on their employees or retirees.

I also sponsored several bills which were signed into law by Governor Paterson during this legislative session. These bills: 1) require third-party notification prior to termination of long-term care and health insurance for persons 65 and older (Chapter 49); and 2) provide financial support and expand participation in Naturally Recurring Retirement Communities (Chapters 348 and 410).

Finally, when I became Chairman of the State Senate Committee on Aging, I contacted every Senior Center in New York State to ask them to document their center's need for infrastructure repairs. Through this process, 47 Senior Centers will receive funding for infrastructure repair in two rounds of funding. One such center which will be awarded funding in the second round is located at the Maurice I. Schwartz Towers, 90 North Street, Auburn, New York. This center is slated to receive \$28,895 to replace five steel entrance doors. This is the first time in the history of the New York State Senate that a project of this scope has been undertaken. You may be interested to know that of the 47 centers that have been awarded funding, 35 are located north of New York City.

Thank you again for your editorial which supports my bill (S.3149). As you can see, I have been one of the few legislators to sponsor and propose creative solutions to address New York State's severe financial difficulties without increasing taxes.

As long as gay marriage and abortion are seen as the defining issues, we will not have much in common. If however we can look beyond these issues, I have every confidence that together we will be able to solve other problems of mutual concern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruben Diaz", written in a cursive style.

State Senator Rubén Díaz, Chairman
New York State Senate Committee on Aging.
SD 32

RD: cbs