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STATE SENATE
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2009-10 REPORT

Office of the New York State Majority Leader
Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr.
New York State Senate Majority Leader
Chairman, New York State Senate Standing Committee on
Housing, Construction and Community Development
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THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

PEDRO ESPADA, JR.
SENATOR, 33RD DISTRICT
MAJORITY LEADER

**VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
FOR URBAN POLICY & PLANNING**

CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON
HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

VICE CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON
RULES

COMMITTEES
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& SMALL BUSINESS
EDUCATION
FINANCE
INSURANCE
INVESTIGATIONS &
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
JUDICIARY

December 1, 2010

Dear Resident of New York State:

It has been an honor to serve you as Majority Leader of the New York State Senate during my term in office as Senator of the 33rd District in the Bronx. I am proud to present this Annual Report of the Office of the Majority Leader of the New York State Senate, Office of the Vice President of the Senate Office for Urban Policy and Planning and the Senate Standing Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development. While it is impossible to list all of the achievements, it summarizes the highlights of my work on your behalf during 2009-2010.

Although it is not unusual for a Senate Standing Committee to present an annual report, this is the first time that a Senate Majority Leader has provided such a document to the public. It is representative of my efforts to transform this Office, in particular, and the New York State Senate overall, into a body of transparency, bipartisanship and public accountability. It gives you an overview and the opportunity to review and understand our work.

Thank you for your interest in this report, and for your support in the past, present and future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pedro Espada, Jr." in a cursive style.

Pedro Espada, Jr.
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
Vice President, Urban Policy and Planning
Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Housing,
Construction and Community Development

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OFFICE OF THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During my tenure as Majority Leader of the New York State Senate, and concurrently as Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development, my efforts to bring transparency and accountability to State government became a priority and received the support of both Democrats and Republicans for the first time in the history of the Senate.

With core Democratic values serving as the foundation, myself, my colleagues from both sides of the aisle and I made history by implementing momentous, unprecedented reform in the New York State Senate – addressing issues ranging from equalization of resources, to empowerment of all 62 Senators, the State’s 19.5 million residents and, more specifically, the Hispanic population, as well as many other meaningful Senate and ethics reform measures. Empowerment of all 62, which became a mantra of sorts, empowered gave New York’s residents a voice and the resources and representation they expect and deserve.

The road was long and difficult at every turn, but through a bipartisan effort, rules changes were adopted that strengthened the committee process, increased transparency and disclosure to give the public greater insight into legislative proceedings, and placed term limits on the length of time legislative leaders and committee chairs can serve, among other reform initiatives.

Of course, reform never comes easy. But we overcame the obstacles of these unprecedented tumultuous economic times and strong resistance to change (after all, the status quo had been in place for over 40 years).

Although more reform legislation has been enacted during this period than over the past four decades, a constant refrain in this report will be that much more needs to be accomplished by way of Senate and ethics reform if complete transparency and accountability can ever be a reality in State government.

During my tenure as Chairman of the Housing Committee, we held more public hearings, open forums and summits, and passed more legislation to maintain existing and develop new affordable housing for the State’s most vulnerable tenants and homeowners, than what any Housing Committee had done over the past 40 years.

As the first Senate Majority Leader from the Bronx and of Hispanic origin, I am proud that we made an imprint on education, housing, job and small business development, distribution of discretionary State funds, and other issues that impact the Hispanic population, boroughs and residents from Buffalo to Montauk. I was vocal and visible, and engaged the community in issues so that residents participated in the development of solutions. I held the first-ever virtual town hall meeting in the Bronx so working families who could not come to Albany or my district offices could participate in government. I trust that all of my work comes alive on the pages of this report.

I am confident that my Senate colleagues and I will be judged not on the events of the past, but on the results of our actions. The work is not over. There is much more to be done.

SENATE REFORM

During the term in which Senator Pedro Espada, Jr. served as the first Hispanic Majority Leader of the New York State Senate, and the first Senator from The Bronx to hold this distinction, the Office of the Majority Leader experienced a transformational new mission to challenge the status quo and introduce practical change that would reform the manner in which the Senate and State Legislature conducts business and represents the State's 19.5 million residents. The Senate Majority Leader's Office was able to achieve real, historic reforms to make the New York State Senate more accountable and transparent to the public, and more inclusive to all 62 Senators, no matter which side of the aisle they sat. While much progress was made, the Senate, unfortunately, fell short of its goals. Much more needs to be done in the 2011 Legislative Session.

The sweeping and dramatic reform in the New York State Senate led by Senate Majority Leader Espada was not pursued surreptitiously. It was not a power play, but rather it was born out of the need to empower the Latino population with long overdue representation in the highest ranks of State government, and to spread power among all Senators for the benefit of the State's residents. Furthermore, it was achieved lawfully within the U.S. Constitution and Senate rules.

But the pundits continue to blame June 8, 2009 for all that's wrong in Albany, instead of acknowledging that the reforms gained in this Legislative Session were the result of June 8, 2009 – and that this date in State government history set into motion this work in progress (and will remain so until reform is fully achieved). They may not agree with the path taken, but the fact is, Senate reform would not be where it is today if not for Majority Leader Espada and June 8, 2009. The results of this reform were never more evident:

- * Bills like marriage equality and farm workers' protections were brought to the Senate floor for a full vote. Pre-Senate reform, these bills would not have seen the light of day.
- * Now every Senate member can be an agent for change on behalf of their constituents.
- * Latinos throughout the State embraced June 8, 2009 because they realized that while it happened in a dramatic and bold way, this was likely the only way they would ever receive recognition, representation and a voice in the highest levels of State government.
- * Senate rules were changed that began the process of restoring faith, trust and confidence in State government – rules that were adopted in bipartisan fashion and have changed the way the Senate operates.
- * There is increased transparency and a stronger committee process, with information being made more accessible to the public and Senate members now having the ability to request the release of a bill from committee for a full floor vote.
- * There are now term limits on legislative leaders and committee chairs.

These reforms just scratch the surface. The Senate made a quantum leap in structural and procedural reforms, but still has a long way to go as a legislative body in terms of budget, ethics, discretionary funding and redistricting reforms. Much more needs to be done – and this should be the mantra of the 2011 Legislative Session.

Majority Leader Espada said reform efforts must continue with equalization of resources to ensure that all Senators, no matter what side of the aisle they sit, have the ability to provide vital State discretionary funds to organizations and programs that serve their districts. State residents should not be penalized because their State legislative representatives are not in the majority party. All residents deserve these resources. This is the most basic reform, one that empowers every Senator and every resident.

Still, there must be a greater effort in the restructuring of committees so Senators can provide more effective representation for all residents.

The Majority Leader believes strongly that a special independent, non-partisan redistricting commission should be appointed to draw the lines for state legislative districts. This commission would ensure fair and equitable representation for all districts in the selection of their elected officials. Particular attention must be given to minority communities to ensure that they are appropriately represented in State government. The Majority Leader remains an advocate for conducting elections in non-partisan fashion, (i.e., candidates would not seek office under a specific party label).

The Majority Leader challenges all Senate members --new and returning-- to remain steadfast in the commitment to finish the work of real, meaningful reform. Disagreements and political party labels must not be a distraction to achieving this reform, as well as to continue progress and advancement in ethics, budget, redistricting and other reforms.

ETHICS REFORM

To achieve transparency and accountability in State government, ethics reform must be part of overall reform in the Senate and State Legislature – or words like “transparency” and “accountability” will ring hollow.

Majority Leader Espada’s focus has been a sweeping and uncompromising ethics reform agenda that addresses such issues as campaign financing, disclosure requirements, civil and criminal State ethics law, and redistricting.

Majority Leader Espada led efforts to bring about Senate and ethics reform in June of 2009, and also was one of the first elected officials to sign on to former New York City Mayor Edward I. Koch’s trio of New York Uprising pledges to reform ethics, the budget process and redistricting.

Only real change in these areas will advance transparency and accountability, and produce honest, open government. Pandering special interests will not achieve reform. While special interests, such as good government reform advocates and labor, health care, education, tenant, landlord and other lobbies play a role under appropriate circumstances (public hearings and forums), they should not drive public policy and legislation.

In his efforts toward ethics reform, Majority Leader Espada introduced legislation and supported many reform measures intended to stop the influence of special interest groups:

- * Signed on to former New York City Mayor Edward I. Koch's trio of New York Uprising pledges to reform ethics, the budget process and redistricting.
- * Eliminate "governing-by-special-interest." This would afford the Senate and Assembly the ability to govern and make decisions based on what is best for their constituents and New York as a whole.
- * Revamp the State's campaign finance system.
- * Institute public financing of political campaigns.
- * Strengthen Board of Elections enforcement authority over strict adherence to campaign finance laws.
- * Increase penalties for violating election and campaign finance laws.
- * Ban use of campaign funds for private use.
- * Full disclosure by State Legislators of outside sources of income.
- * Full disclosure of activity of lobbyists, monitored by an independent lobbying commission.
- * Amend civil and criminal law to prohibit elected officials and other public officers from using government resources for outside, for-profit business.
- * Amend civil and criminal law to clearly define an ongoing scheme to use government resources for outside, for-profit business as a felony.
- * The "D.A." Bill, which would make it a misdemeanor when a district attorney solicits, accepts or receives any contribution, gift or anything else of value, under any circumstances, from a criminal defendant, or their attorneys and other representatives.

* The Misdemeanor Bill, which would establish clear legal standards that provide for automatic expulsion of members of the State Legislature, as well as other public officers, convicted of egregious Class-A misdemeanor offenses as defined in the New York State penal code, including assault in the third degree; sexual misconduct; sexual abuse in the second degree, arson in the fifth degree; aggravated harassment in the second degree involving physical contact; endangering the welfare of a child; endangering the welfare of an incompetent or physically disabled person.

STATE BUDGET

The Office of the Senate Majority Leader has focused on creative and practical solutions to help those who have been hit hardest by this economic crisis such as creating jobs, providing tax relief, assisting small businesses and helping those tenants who struggle to pay their rent. These actions not only help State residents through these difficult economic times, but they will also place the State on track to economic recovery. We cannot rely on the typical cuts often proposed in Albany because true fiscal solvency for our State will only happen with reform and restructuring of the State budget.

Working in concert with the full Senate in a bipartisan manner, this Office began addressing State budget shortfalls in 2009 culminating in a Deficit Reduction Plan to address the serious drop in State revenue due to the economic crisis. The Deficit Reduction Plan achieved fiscal responsibility to restore the State's long-term financial solvency, which avoided placing the burden on the backs of the people already hit hardest by the economic recession – the poor, elderly, children and working families.

The Majority Leader successfully fought to completely avert mid-year cuts to school aid that would have taken money out of classrooms. Property tax increases were averted for working families. In addition, reductions to health care spending were fought in a responsible way without giving away \$750 million in Federal funding. This kept hospitals open and health services available to people who need care.

Looking forward, if the Legislature came away with any lessons, it is clear that Albany lawmakers cannot continue to address the State budget in crisis mode, but must approach it from a broader perspective with long-term thinking that will result in creating jobs, revitalizing urban areas and developing much-needed affordable housing – all of which will set the State on the fast track to economic recovery.

The Majority Leader's Office and the Senate Democratic Conference approved \$18 million in the State's enacted budget explicitly to provide the City of New York with the funds necessary to save 50 senior centers targeted for closure. Majority Leader Espada successfully saved two senior centers in the Bronx for the elderly who have come to depend on these facilities as their second home. They go there daily (as do thousands of seniors at other facilities throughout New York) to enjoy a nutritious meal, participate in recreational/social activities and celebrate holidays and birthdays. This is the type of collaborative, bipartisan effort that must continue if the State Legislature expects to resolve the financial crisis gripping our local economy.

"In these difficult fiscal times, we have been forced to make tough decisions that will restructure the economic landscape for the benefit of state government's long-term financial solvency. We achieved this by enacting fundamental reform of the state pension system that will save taxpayers billions of dollars, reduce State expenditures, and secure the retirement benefits of all public employees in the State of New York well into the future."

–Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr.

HUMAN, CIVIL, WOMEN AND WORKER RIGHTS

As someone who came to America at a young age with his family from their native Puerto Rico – and was raised in public housing, survived on public assistance, became a teenage father, tenant activist, public school teacher and counselor, and established a healthcare network for the medically under-served – Senate Majority Leader Espada has been a life-long champion for those who are denied human and civil rights. The Majority Leader made his presence felt in the Senate Chamber by speaking and acting with passion, certainty and clarity for those populations who continue to be denied these basic rights.

DOMESTIC WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS

Senate Majority Leader Espada helped lead the fight for increased protections for domestic workers, largely a population of Latino, Eastern European, Irish and other immigrants. The result was legislation that makes New York the first state in the country to provide new standards of worker protections for the more than 200,000-member work force in an industry that (like farm workers) had been long-ignored and, for decades, denied civil, human and worker rights. This historic legislation guarantees protection from discrimination, one day of rest per week, overtime pay and other basic labor protections that have long been denied to nannies, housekeepers and elderly care givers employed in private homes.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

If not for Senate Majority Leader Espada's Senate reform efforts, the Marriage Equality bill would not have been brought to the Senate chamber for a full floor vote. Like the farm workers legislation, it was the first time a marriage equality bill was brought to the chamber floor for a vote. Although it was defeated, it was a historic vote because it put to the test for the first time the newly enacted Senate reform of bringing a bill to a full floor vote despite not being released from committee. Majority Leader Espada supported Marriage Equality legislation as a matter of conscience and as an issue of civil and human rights.

FARM WORKERS RIGHTS

It began on a visit to an upstate New York duck farm in Sullivan County in August 2009, an eye-opening encounter during which a group of farm laborers spoke of unconscionable treatment in 21st century America. They alleged sexual abuse against women, underpayment, being overworked, no paid sick days or vacation and working weeks at a time without a day off. From that moment, Senate Majority Leader Espada brought civil and human rights issues of farm workers to the Senate Chamber with dramatic legislation that would provide basic protections and restore dignity to a population of thousands of farm laborers, mostly immigrants of Mexican, Latin American, Puerto Rican and other Hispanic origins. The legislation was designed to afford farm laborers with the same working conditions and human and civil rights enjoyed by workers in every other industry in New York State. As part of his campaign, which won the editorial support of the *New York Daily News* and other major newspapers, Majority Leader Espada held rallies and press conferences throughout the State with farm workers and advocates at his side (including human rights activist Kerry Kennedy) to focus the public spotlight on the mistreatment and abuses of farm workers. Majority Leader Espada's Senate reform efforts brought the farm workers bill to the chamber floor for a full vote, which was the first time such legislation was put to a vote. It was narrowly defeated, but Majority Leader Espada will continue the crusade for farm workers until they are granted rights and protections.



IMMIGRATION PROTECTIONS

An alarming rash of bias attacks against immigrants, particularly Hispanics in the Bronx, Staten Island and Long Island – coupled with the rise in anti-immigration sentiment across the country sparked by discriminatory immigration laws passed in Arizona – prompted a swift and decisive response by Senate Majority Leader Espada. Joined by his colleagues, Senate Majority Conference Leader John L. Sampson and Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr., the Senate Majority Leader held a first-ever Immigration Forum that received the support and participation of community based organizations, clergy and immigration advocates. The Senate Majority Leader also unveiled a strong pro-immigration legislative package designed to provide greater protections and to strengthen the rights of immigrant populations across the State – including protections against racial and ethnic profiling, encouraging immigrants to come forward with information without the fear of reprisal or deportation, improve educational opportunities to immigrant students and secure affordable housing and job opportunities to families. The Immigration Forum was held on September 9, 2010 at Bronx Community College.

“Setbacks are part of every human rights struggle, as we have witnessed over the course of history, for example, in the human rights struggles of women and African Americans. These setbacks, however, serve to reinvigorate and strengthen, which is why we must be unrelenting in our ultimate goal of achieving rights and protections for farm workers and marriage equality.”
–Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr.

EDUCATION

MID-TERM BUDGET CUTS AVOIDED

Senate Majority Leader Espada was vehemently opposed to mid-term budget cuts to the education budget. Together with the Democratic Majority Leadership, the Majority Leader held firmly against these cuts and saved funding for classrooms and students from being reduced.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Senate Majority Leader Espada was a vocal proponent of school governance and was active in passing the School Governance Reform Package that empowers parents with greater access to the school system and all aspects of their children’s education, as well as increased transparency and fiscal oversight, promoting enhanced arts education, addressing school safety issues and strengthening the role of community superintendents.

FREE STUDENT METRO-CARDS

Senate Majority Leader Espada was instrumental in leading the fight to save the Free Student Metrocard Program when the MTA proposed to eliminate free student transportation. The Majority Leader, who joined students in decrying the MTA’s proposal, noted that families already struggling financially would be unable to afford the additional burden of paying for their children’s school transportation. Majority Leader Espada was one of the most vocal advocates in the Senate calling for the retention of the Free Student Metrocard Program and led Senate action that secured \$25 million in State funding to save the program.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Senate Majority Leader Espada was a strong advocate for and instrumental in passing legislation that expanded the number of charter schools from 200 to 460 because it not only empowered parents and children – particularly the 40,000 students who applied for 8,500 seats in New York City charter schools – with the choice of the best schools, but it qualified New York State for \$700 million in Race to the Top Federal funds. Not to be lost is the fact that these Race To The Top funds also benefit the public school system. In this economy, it was vital to pass legislation that put New York State in position to leverage Federal dollars for education, rather than further burdening the State’s taxpayers. This is why Majority Leader Espada gained the support of parents and educators when he organized rallies in support of expanding the charter school cap. As a former educator, Majority Leader Espada believes that charter schools, with their extraordinary record of success, help close the achievement gap between minority students and students in affluent communities, assure greater educational opportunity and improve the high school graduation rate. Majority Leader Espada felt that the lack of options and creativity in education was setting up children for mediocrity and failure. The funding will provide resources for world-class education for children and help train the workforce to understand that New York needs to compete in a global economy. This will have no greater impact than on Hispanic and African American students and those in low-income families because studies demonstrate that students of color perform significantly better academically, particularly in math and reading, in charter school environments.



“The new school governance reform package will hold the Mayor accountable for the performance of the City’s public school system. Equally important, it will allow greater parental involvement in their children’s education, increased curriculum oversight by senior school officials, and decision-making input at the school level by superintendents, principals and parents on a range of issues, including curriculum and academic programs, transportation, school safety and nutrition.”

–Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND INITIATIVES/ CONSTITUENT SERVICES

Senate Majority Leader Espada sponsored several high-profile events to call attention to issues that affect the lives of his constituents and residents throughout New York State. These events became his signature as he delivered issues to the community with flare and drama often engaging residents, clergy, neighborhood organizers and business leaders to help in the advancement of important messages. Never before in the history of the Majority Leader's Office were the resources and influence of the position used with such effectiveness.

WALK FOR PEACE—END TO YOUTH VIOLENCE

Using the opportunity of the national holiday celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Senate Majority Leader Espada coordinated a massive Walk for Peace event to honor the civil rights leader and his work. But it was more than a peace walk. As he always does, Majority Leader Espada tied the march into another important campaign that he launched – an end to gun and youth violence. He asked all youth participants to sign an anti-violence pledge prior to the start of the march.

IMMIGRATION FORUM

Anti-immigrant sentiment borne of discriminatory laws passed in Arizona and other states and the rash of bias attacks against immigrants, mostly of Hispanic origin, in the Bronx, Staten Island and Long Island, prompted a swift and dramatic response by Senate Majority Leader Espada. In addition to condemning immigration bias, he sponsored a special Immigration Forum at Bronx Community College, where panelists and experts in immigrant rights, immigration organizations, clergy and other advocates were on hand to provide private counsel and advice on a number of immigration issues to community residents.

RELIEF CAMPAIGN FOR HAITI EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

To demonstrate support for Haitian immigrants in New York and their family back home, Senate Majority Leader Espada assembled a group of clerical leaders and sent them to Haiti on a Mission of Mercy. With these clergy leaders, the Majority Leader launched a massive relief effort that secured important medical supplies (including antibiotics, diabetes supplies and other emergency medicines) donated by major pharmaceutical manufacturers, bottled water, non-perishable food and clothing – all of which was delivered to earthquake victims in Haiti.

COMMUNITY BOARD NEWSLETTER

"News from the Majority Leader" is a newsletter containing updates and information on Senate Majority Leader Espada's services, constituent work, legislation, program funding and other efforts on issues specific to each Community Board. It was distributed periodically at Community Board meetings by staff members of the Majority Leader's Office. Board members and residents found the newsletters useful and effective, and were pleased that the Majority Leader was so attentive to needs and issues specific to their neighborhoods that he would create a publication tailored only to them.

YOUTH TALENT SHOW

Senate Majority Leader Espada sponsored a Youth Talent Event to showcase the singing and dancing talents of local children, demonstrating to young people that there are alternatives to drug, guns, gangs and violence. Helping them channel their creative skills and talents before an audience helped build self-esteem and show that people care about them.



CENSUS 2010

When the push was on to make sure every New Yorker was counted in Census 2010, Senate Majority Leader Espada hit the pavement – but he made sure he had a small army with him to deliver the message. Rather than come across as just another talking head spewing words about the Census, the Majority Leader assembled residents and business, clergy and community leaders to launch a Census 2010 Awareness Campaign that had volunteers walking the streets and explaining to fellow citizens the importance of mailing their Census questionnaire. Majority Leader Espada and the members of his small army symbolically mailed their own questionnaires before fanning out into the community to explain to people that Census participation directly impacted the future of their neighborhoods in terms of receiving their fair share of Federal and State funds for education, transportation, safety and other services. Using the mantra, “Count Me In,” Senate Majority Leader Espada emphasized that the State could not afford to lose even a dollar of funding given the budget crisis and economic difficulties.



ANTI-OBESITY CAMPAIGN

Having spent over three decades providing community health care to the medically indigent in under-served neighborhoods, and witnessing first-hand the burgeoning juvenile and adult obesity epidemic – with the Bronx having the worst incident rate of all the boroughs – Senate Majority Leader Espada launched a community based Anti-Obesity Campaign. He utilized the resources of the Majority Leader’s Office and incorporated the treatment and philosophy deployed at his community health centers – reaching children and parents through nutrition education and outreach. Awareness without action and things like a special tax levy on soda does little to reverse the obesity epidemic. However, the Majority Leader’s Anti-Obesity Campaign provides educational workshops bolstered by a Farmer’s Market Initiative in which nutritious food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables – and even recipes offering healthy preparation techniques – is distributed throughout Bronx communities. The Majority Leader’s Anti-Obesity Campaign is coordinated through Davidson Community Center, Inc. in the Bronx, a community-based, not-for-profit advocacy organization that has provided housing, job placement/job readiness, after-school/tutoring, nutrition, youth and many other assistance programs to Bronx residents for nearly three decades.



VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING

The first-ever Virtual Town Hall Meeting in the Bronx was hosted by Senate Majority Leader Espada. Held from the Senate Chamber Floor, at the time it aired over the Internet and BronxNet, it attracted the most viewers and participants of any virtual town hall meeting held by other elected officials. From the comfort of their home, constituents had the opportunity to have their voice heard and discuss issues such as the budget, education, health care, transportation and affordable housing with the Senate Majority Leader.

STOP THE SAG, PULL YOUR PANTS UP CAMPAIGN

Senate Majority Leader Espada launched an awareness campaign to coincide with the opening of the 2010/11 school session: “Stop the Sag, Pull Your Pants Up.” The campaign was designed to urge school children to keep their pants from sagging below their underwear. This message was featured on a moving billboard on the side of a truck. The Majority Leader is a staunch supporter of freedom of expression, but with freedom comes responsibility. This campaign did not inhibit freedom and expression, but rather was aimed at creating awareness among young people how they can use their freedom of choice by making a positive statement. Racism, profiling and other injustices are rampant, especially in minority populations. Majority Leader Espada said young people need to be made aware that sagging pants add to this stigma and that clothing can make a difference in the success or failure of a job interview and how people view them.



MOVIE DAY AT SENIOR CENTERS

Movie Day at senior centers became a popular event at local facilities. Senate Majority Leader Espada brought the popcorn and movies and the seniors just kicked back and relaxed.



HOLIDAY LIGHTS

The lights almost went dark until Majority Leader Espada was able to secure funding for the holiday lights along the Kingsbridge Road commercial strip. It was a collaborative effort by the Majority Leader, local merchants and Montefiore Medical Center.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES—HOUSING

The Majority Leader's Office has helped thousands of families and individuals in the resolution of housing issues that range from rent overcharges and landlord disputes to securing rent-subsidized apartments and bringing in City and State agencies in cases of no heat and hot water.

SAVING SENIOR CENTERS

After intervening with the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York, Majority Leader Espada was able to save Tolentine-Zeiser and RAIN Bailey Senior Centers from being closed down by the City. City Hall had planned to shutter both centers. The Majority Leader refused to allow the budget to be balanced on the frail shoulders of our most vulnerable populations that rely on these centers for services, daily meals, socialization and recreational programs.

THANKSGIVING DINNER

Senate Majority Leader Espada helped restore gas service, heat and hot water for 52 families at 2285 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx who had been without these basic services for several months. The gas had not been turned on in time for Thanksgiving, so the Majority Leader hosted Thanksgiving for the tenants at a local facility where he catered a Thanksgiving feast. While this story had a happy ending, it underscored deficiencies in the system which had allowed the landlord to go unchecked in ignoring the tenants' plea. It was not until Majority Leader Espada intervened and secured the involvement of various City and State agencies that the tenants had their services restored.



RECOGNITION AWARDS

Again transcending conventional approaches, Majority Leader Espada celebrated Black History Month, Women's History Month and the achievements of educators and parents in a way that promoted and recognized the achievements, contributions and services of local residents and leaders who have made a difference in their communities. In each of these categories, the Majority Leader honored women, African-Americans, teachers and parents whose professional and personal efforts have made an impact on education and after-school programs, children, senior citizens, economic development and other aspects of their communities.



STATE GRANTS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

State grants, also referred to as member items, traditionally have supplemented primary funding received by community organizations so that these organizations can reach even more people by providing services and programs. With private funding sources drastically reduced and, in many instances, drying up completely as a result of the economic crisis, community organizations have become more reliant on State grants at a time when greater numbers of families and individuals are turning to these services and programs. Since local residents have become more dependent on the services of community organizations, these State grants are an investment in our children, families, seniors and individuals. In 2009-2010, Senate Majority Leader Espada, recognizing the importance of funding organizations that provide education, after school, youth sports, senior, health, nutrition, housing and many other important programs and services, provided vital State grants to the following organizations and institutions:

Church of the Mediator: \$30,000 used for capital improvements to their facilities.

PS 59 Community School of Technology: \$40,000 for program support and expansion of the Extended Learning Time Program.

JASA Corp.: \$26,000 for the purchase of equipment and furniture for the JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center.

PS 9: \$40,000 for capital improvements and purchase of equipment.

PS 86: \$25,000 used towards the cost of an educational trip to Japan for 30 fifth grade students.

PS 310: \$10,000 for program support and the purchase of musical instruments and equipment for the after-school program.

Police Athletic League: \$20,000 for support of the after-school and teen programs at the PAL's Webster Center in the Bronx.

Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center: \$30,000 for program support and expansion, workshops, training and the purchase of equipment and supplies.

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center: \$120,000 for program support for the College Bound Program, Teen Program, Tracey Towers Youth Center and the Boys & Girls Club.

Bronx Business Alliance: \$20,000 for program support for small business owners, including workshops and seminars, and to purchase equipment and supplies.

Davidson Community Center: \$80,000 for Anti-Obesity and Nutrition Education and Outreach

Initiative.

Tanima Production: \$30,000 for program support including transportation and the purchase of equipment, supplies, costumes and uniforms

Reading Excellence and Discovery Foundation: \$20,000 for program support including tutors and materials.

Yes The Bronx: \$20,000 for program support for the Run Against Obesity Program and other health initiatives.

St Ann's Church of Morrisania: \$15,000 for program support for the gun violence prevention/education program, counseling program and other program activities.

Bedford Park Multi-Service Center for Senior Citizens: \$50,000 for program support and purchase of a van and/or equipment and computers.

Tremont Community Senior Citizen Service Center: \$60,000 for capital improvements to the senior center and to purchase a van, equipment and furniture.

Oval Community Youth Program: \$15,000 for support of the baseball travel team, purchase equipment and uniforms, and other baseball associated costs.

New York City Parks and Recreation: \$14,000 for program support for the City Seasonal Aide Park Enforcement Officers and to purchase equipment for parks.

RAIN Bailey Senior Center: \$25,000 for program support and equipment

Tremont United Methodist Church: \$10,000 for program support and purchase of equipment and computers.

New York Public Library: \$50,000 for the purchase of books and other materials (DVDs, periodicals, CDs, online databases) and to enhance the collections at Bronx Library Center, Kingsbridge Library, Grand Concourse Library, Tremont Library, Mosholu Library, Van Cortlandt Library, West Farms Library and Jerome Park Library.

Mount Hope Housing Corp.: \$85,000 for program support for a new Community Center, the New Hope Morris Project, the OATES Program, student financial literacy and savings bond program, and training, recruitment and workshops.

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The economic crisis made clear the mission for 2009-2010. With tenants, homeowners, co-op and condominium owners struggling to pay rent, mortgages, maintenance fees and property taxes, Senate Majority Leader Espada's legislative priorities and initiatives focused on helping low and middle-income working families pay their rent, providing tax relief to homeowners, and creating and maintaining affordable housing for the populations most in need. Under the leadership of Majority Leader Espada, in his position as Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development, the number of housing bills signed into law and legislation introduced in 2009-10 has been the highest than in any other two-year period over the past 40 years. Additionally, Majority Leader Espada held more public hearings and other public forums to address vital housing issues in 2009-10 than were held in the past four decades. Even as the State was facing its own economic crisis, the Majority Leader was able to secure millions of dollars in funding for programs that create and maintain affordable housing with the dual benefit of creating jobs and business and economic development. The Majority Leader's efforts in this area were designed to maintain, increase and rehabilitate affordable housing for the poor and middle class. In addition, Majority Leader Espada's efforts in the affordable housing arena served to address other pressing issues facing the State during this economic crisis: job creation, small business growth and revenue for local economies.

LEGISLATION

Senate Majority Leader Espada assembled a progressive affordable housing legislative initiative aimed at rehabilitating, preserving and constructing housing for the poor, middle and working class families – apartment renters, homeowners, and owners of co-ops and condos – throughout the State of New York.

PREFERENTIAL RENT RENEWAL

Legislation that prohibits landlords from abandoning preferential rent upon lease renewal of rent-stabilized apartments.

RENT ASSISTANCE BILL

An assistance program that provides tangible and immediate relief by freezing the rents of 600,000 tenants of rent-stabilized apartments whose annual household income is \$45,000 or less and one-third or more of that income is used to pay the rent. The program does not require taxpayer funding.



HOUSING INVESTMENT FUND

Legislation that creates a dedicated revenue stream for construction, rehabilitation and preservation of affordable housing capital projects.

INCREASE HFA BONDING CAP

Legislation that increases the maximum bonding authority of the New York State Housing Finance Agency by \$500 million, increasing the total bonds value from \$13.78 billion to \$14.28 billion.

REVISION OF DEFINITION OF 'MORTGAGE'

Legislation that authorizes SONYMA to issue and insure second mortgages for down payment and closing costs to assist potential homeowners.

WAITING LISTS POSTED BY MUNICIPALLY AIDED PROJECTS

Legislation that requires all municipally aided projects in New York City to post the first and last names of all persons on waiting lists in the chronological order of receipt by the management office or posted in the project lobby where there is no on-site management office.

REDUCE LIENS FOR MUNICIPALLY FINANCED REPAIRS

Legislation that extends the city of New York's authority to reduce the liens on Article 7-A properties to zero for municipally financed repairs, which will encourage reinvestment in these properties. It also includes revised reporting requirements.

RENT RESTRUCTURE FOR FEDERALLY ACQUIRED DWELLING UNITS

Legislation that grants New York City the authority (through June 30, 2014) to restructure the rents of dwelling units in buildings acquired by the Federal government as a result of foreclosure of a mortgage loan insured or held by the government. Restructuring is contingent on rehabilitation of the property.

RESTRUCTURE RENTS IN BUILDINGS RECEIVING LOW-INTEREST LOANS

Legislation that extends the existing authority of the City of New York's local housing agency to restructure rents in residential buildings that receive low-interest, municipally financed rehabilitation loans under Article 8 of the Private Housing Finance law.

REAL PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT

Legislation that requires that the local legislative body responsible for approving a requested tax exemption for the Housing Development Funding Company do so within 120 days.

EXTENSION TO FINANCE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

Legislation that amends the Private Housing Finance Law and Real Property Tax Law to provide a two-year extension to the Housing and Development Corporation that continues the financing of newly constructed and rehabilitated low- and moderate-income housing in New York City (allowing it to enter into direct loan agreements and joint financing programs).

APPROVAL OF LOANS AND ENCUMBRANCE

Legislation that permits the supervising agency to approve a loan and encumbrance in an amount in excess of the actual cost of the project when the redevelopment company undergoes a comprehensive redevelopment plan, provided that such cost represents capital improvements, redevelopment or acquisition by a new owner. The redevelopment company must agree to stay subject to these provisions for no less than 15 years and any consequent rent increase must not be unduly burdensome on tenants.

REMOVAL OF UNSANITARY CONDITIONS IN A REHABILITATION PROJECT

Legislation that authorizes the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development to issue loans that shall not exceed \$35,000 per dwelling unit to owners of multiple dwellings for the purpose of removing substandard or unsanitary conditions to be paid back at the end of the life of the rehabilitation project defined as no longer than 30 years or a shorter period defined by the agency.

MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE BILL OF 2009

Legislation that provides additional protections for homeowners at risk of foreclosure and aimed at preventing a similar crisis from occurring in the future. It requires a 90-day foreclosure notice as well as proper notice to tenants and safe/habitable conditions. It also expands the mandatory settlement conference and requires good faith negotiations.

FEDERAL FUNDING ELIGIBILITY FOR NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Legislation makes NYCHA eligible for an immediate one-time infusion of \$400 million in Federal funding for capital projects and \$75 million in Federal funding for operational purposes annually every year thereafter. Senate Majority Leader Espada, who was raised in public housing, was aware of the importance of this NYCHA funding because, historically, the agency has been the backbone of affordable housing for tens of thousands of low-income, working families. Federal capital and operational funds serve to significantly improve the quality of life for thousands of families through sorely needed modernization of kitchens and bathrooms and upgrades and repairs to building lobbies, elevators, roofs, boilers and other parts of the aging infrastructure. In addition, these Federal funds serve as an infusion to the City's economy by creating business for small contracting companies and new jobs for local residents. Federalizing all of NYCHA's units eliminates the economic burden on the State budget to fund NYCHA's capital and operational projects.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/FORUMS/EVENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUMMIT

One of Senate Majority Leader Espada's first actions in his capacity as Housing Committee Chairman was to convene an Affordable Housing Summit. A direct result of this Summit was his affordable housing legislative agenda, whose centerpiece was the rent assistance program, also known as the "Rent Freeze" bill. It was the first time in four decades that any Senate committee or office held a public forum on affordable housing and the first time over that same period that the Office of Senate Majority Leader, combined with the Housing Committee, brought together experts from government agencies, academia, the financial community, housing advocacy organizations and think-tank organizations, not-for-profit and for-profit developers to analyze and assess – and propose solutions to – several critical housing issues including strategies that encourage the preservation and construction of affordable housing, tenant and homeowner protections, foreclosure and credit crisis, and the impact of the rent regulation system on the City's economy, tenants, landlords and developers. The Summit was held at the NYU Helen and Marshall Kimmel Center for University Life in April 2009.

PUBLIC HEARING ON ILLEGAL DIVISION (PARTITIONING) OF APARTMENTS AND PRIVATE HOMES

The death of two New York City Firefighters and severe injuries to two others when they were forced to leap from the fourth story of a burning Bronx building (because they became entrapped in an apartment whose illegal subdivision with drywall partitions created a maze-like effect) prompted Majority Leader Espada to hold a public hearing to underscore the impact that this dangerous and unlawful practice has on tenants and Firefighter safety during an emergency. Participants included community organizers and representatives of the FDNY, Firefighters Unions and city housing agencies, whose testimony greatly assisted Senate Majority Leader Espada in authoring legislation that makes it easier to gain access to apartment dwellings and other housing suspected of illegal division with drywall partitions. The hearing was held at Bronx Community College in March 2009.

PUBLIC HEARING ON SECTION-8 VOUCHERS CRISIS

When the New York City Housing Authority canceled 2,800 Section-8 Housing Vouchers, with the threat looming of an additional 10,000 vouchers being revoked, Senate Majority Leader Espada held a joint public hearing with the Senate Committee on Social Services to address the restoration of a rent-subsidized affordable housing program relied upon by thousands of low-income families and individuals. At the time, Majority Leader Espada said,

“With more families than ever before unable to afford their rent during this economic crisis, this is not the time to suspend or cancel rent-subsidy programs. This is when families and individuals need this lifeline the most. If we don’t find a way to restore and preserve these vouchers, families will plunge into homelessness and be forced into overburdened shelters.”

–Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr.

The hearing resulted in a special collaboration between Federal, State and City housing agencies (including HUD, HPD, DHCR and NYCHA) that ultimately saved 2,500 Section-8 Vouchers that otherwise would have been taken away from these families and individuals. The additional thousands who were at risk of having their Section-8 Vouchers revoked were also protected as a result of public hearing and subsequent collaboration of government agencies initiated by Majority Leader Espada. The hearing was held at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in April 2010.

HOUSING RALLIES AND FORUMS

In addition to assembling rallies with tenants at City Hall Plaza and at the State Capitol in support of his rent freeze legislation, Senate Majority Leader Espada took his affordable housing agenda to the people by meeting with small groups of community based organizations to present his legislation and initiatives. It was the first time in four decades that a Senate Majority Leader and Housing Committee Chairman met with tenants and homeowners throughout the State.



FUNDING RESOURCES

Working with the Governor, the Majority Leadership and various government agencies, Senate Majority Leader Espada helped secure grants, awards and financing for numerous affordable housing projects –new construction and rehabilitation– throughout New York State. The Senate Majority Leader underscored the importance of securing such funding even at a time when the State was experiencing budget difficulties. First, funding for these projects addressed the need to create and maintain affordable housing throughout the State, especially during the economic crisis when more families and homeowners are faced with the inability to pay their rent and mortgage. Second, these affordable housing projects, both new construction and rehabilitation, created jobs for local residents and generated new business for small contractors – stimulating new revenue streams for the State and local municipalities. This further demonstrates the vital role that the for-profit and not-for-profit housing and development industry has in the State's economic recovery. Examples of these affordable housing project grants, awards and financing are as follows:

*Restored previously cut funds to neighborhood and rural preservation companies (not-for-profits that provide free foreclosure prevention and other vital services).

*\$8 million in awards from the Housing Trust Fund Corporation administered through four DHCR programs for renovation of existing affordable housing.

*\$3.16 million in grants from the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation to finance the construction and renovation of 188 affordable homes throughout the State.

*\$3.5 million in grants from the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation to finance the construction and renovation of 276 affordable housing units across the State.

*\$111.7 million in grants from the New York State Housing Finance Agency and New York State Affordable Housing Corporation to finance the construction and renovation of 1,620 units of affordable housing in the State.

*\$18.8 million in grants from the New York State Housing Finance Agency and New York State Affordable Housing Corporation to create and preserve 432 affordable housing units throughout the State.

*\$38.9 million in grants and mortgage insurance commitments from the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation and the State of New York Mortgage Agency to preserve 296 units of affordable housing in New York State.

*\$2.225 million in awards from DHCR toward the total \$15.1 million allocated to Promesa Housing Development Fund Corporation for the new construction of the Promesa West Tremont Residence, 61 units of new affordable housing for very-low-to-low-income senior citizens and frail elderly in the West Tremont/Mount Hope section of the Bronx.

*\$2.4 million in awards from DHCR toward the total \$14.2 million allocated to SoBRO Development Corporation for the new construction of the East 188th Street Apartments, 40 affordable apartments for very-low-to-low-income families in the Belmont/Fordham section of the Bronx.

*\$35.8 million in grants and mortgage commitments from the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation and the State of New York Mortgage Agency to build and renovate 669 affordable housing units throughout the State.

*\$2.27 million in grants from the New York State Housing Finance Agency and New York State Affordable Housing Corporation to build and renovate 181 affordable housing units across the State.

*\$31.4 million in funding for the modification, repair and rehabilitation of 1,991 units of affordable housing for low-income families, senior citizens and persons with disabilities across the State.

*\$18.3 million in financing from the New York State Housing Finance Agency, New York State Affordable Housing Corporation and Housing Trust Fund Corporation to build and renovate 598 units of affordable housing, assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure, and create jobs and help businesses grow throughout New York State.

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE FOR URBAN POLICY AND PLANNING

As Vice President of the Senate Office for Urban Policy and Planning, Senate Majority Leader Espada pursued a progressive economic development agenda that focused on job creation and growth of small, minority and women-owned businesses.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / JOB CREATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

Senate Majority Leader Espada created a Business and Economic Development Advisory Task Force whose members include the leaders of BIDs, CoCs and Merchant Associations. The task force keeps the Majority Leader informed about the economic and business development interests of the community and issues, initiatives and opportunities that impact the business community and economic well being of the Bronx, New York City and New York State. Among other initiatives, the task force has helped identify interest in investment in start-up companies in the emerging green technology sector that will be crucial to new jobs and economic development throughout the State.

TRADE MISSION

With an eye toward expanding market share and drive exports, Senate Majority Leader Espada is working to identify large businesses and corporations with interest in exporting opportunities in global markets for the Panama Export Trade Mission being led by the U.S. Commerce Department. This would create an abundance of new jobs.

BATHGATE REDEVELOPMENT

Senate Majority Leader Espada has worked to identify private development to revitalize industrial and manufacturing facilities for investment in the Bathgate Redevelopment Zone that promises to attract hundreds of new light manufacturing jobs.

STELLA D'ORO FACILITY REVITALIZATION

Majority Leader Espada has worked with local business and community leaders to identify investor interest in revitalizing the defunct Stella D'Oro Bakery Facility. One of the Majority Leader's proposals has been a mall-type complex with commercial and retail that would generate hundreds of new jobs, replacing those lost when the plant was closed.

SMALL GAS STATION AND AUTO REPAIR SHOP OWNERS

Senate Majority Leader Espada knows that small businesses are the backbone of the State economy. Whenever given the opportunity, the Majority Leader has supported small business when issues threaten to impede their ability to provide services and jobs and contribute to the tax base. Such was the case when the Majority Leader stood with small gas station and auto repair shop owners at a press conference to advocate for legislation he helped pass in the Senate. The legislation, sponsored by the Majority Leader, would have protected these small businesses across the State against predatory oil company giants seeking to bundle service stations and sell them out from under the small owners to large distribution companies. This threatens to drive up prices at the pump and result in the loss of jobs.

KINGSBRIDGE ARMORY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Senate Majority Leader Espada has proposed an innovative and aggressive project that would employ a public-private partnership of Bronx institutions and create over 1,000 new jobs with competitive wages in industries of the future. It would be a true economic development initiative, involving the education and training of a workforce in the necessary skills for new 21st century jobs in emerging green and alternative energy technologies. It would also involve capital investment in the local infrastructure, both commercial and residential, providing a better quality of life for area residents.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FAIRS FOR SMALL, MINORITY, WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES

Senate Majority Leader Espada worked closely with local business organizations to foster business growth of small and minority and women owned businesses by sponsoring workshops and fairs that provide tax incentives and other government assistance.

JOB/CAREER FAIRS

Senate Majority Leader Espada had been working in conjunction with the New York State Division of Labor in planning Job/Career Fairs at local colleges and universities.

PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Senate Majority Leader has identified and directed multi-million dollar State procurement opportunities to local businesses.

MORE POWER, MORE JOBS

Building upon its efforts to combat the unemployment crisis through innovative job creation and retention initiatives, Senate Majority Leader Espada was an advocate of legislation that creates a permanent “Economic Benefit Power Program” to streamline and build on the success of ‘Power for Jobs’ and other successful low cost power for economic development programs. The new program will protect more than 250,000 jobs statewide. As part of this program, qualifying businesses around the State will be offered seven-year agreements for low-cost energy providing them the financial stability to attract and maintain long-term employment commitments.

2010 BUSINESS DIVERSIFICATION ACT—FAIR ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR EXPANSION

Senate Majority Leader Espada was a proponent of promoting new opportunities for the growth and expansion of minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) helping to pass a legislative package that ensures fairness in the contract awarding process for minority-owned and women-owned businesses and enacts clear and targeted regulatory changes to reflect the best business practices in the State's procurement process. An asset management strategy bill also encourages and increases the participation of minority and women-owned financial firms with respect to the investment of assets that are held by State fiduciary-controlled entities.

NORWOOD BUSINESSES

After fire ravaged several retail shops in Norwood, Senate Majority Leader Espada met with business owners and worked closely with local leaders to direct the businesses affected by the blaze to appropriate City and State agencies for assistance in rebuilding. These businesses are important to the area's commerce and provide jobs to local residents.