



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

State Senate Democrats Alert Members Of Congress About New York's Homeland Security Needs

Malcolm A. Smith

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Concerned about the reduction of Homeland Security funding in New York State, members of the State Senate Democratic Conference today visited the nation's capital where they lobbied members of Congress for additional funding to guard the safety of New Yorkers and better protect the state's vital infrastructures.

State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) said he and his Conference are particularly concerned about the dwindling of Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants to New York City. Though the federal UASI grant amount increased from \$124 million in 2006 to \$134 million for 2007, current funding levels still comprise a sharp drop from the \$204 million awarded to New York in 2005 as dollars are steered to other regions of the country.

"Homeland Security dollars should not be a game piece subject to political motives," said Smith. "The fact that six years have passed since September 11th doesn't mean New York City is any less at risk for a devastating attack."

"This is why Senate Democrats have sought to add our voice to calls made by Senators Clinton, Schumer and New York's Congressional delegation for wiser Homeland Security investments," Smith added.

Senator Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn), the Ranking Democrat on the State Senate's Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, said: "It is outrageous that federal Homeland Security dollars have been funneled away from New York City, our nation's largest urban center, with its high population density and no shortage of mass transit systems and world-renowned monuments that have long been identified as potential terrorist targets."

Senator Martin Malave Dilan said: "For several years, New Yorkers have shown their resilience in combating the threat of terrorism by not letting fear take hold of their lives. Now it is the obligation and duty of the federal government to follow through with assistance and support for the brave men and women of New York City and surrounding areas."

Senator Jose Serrano (D-Bronx) said: "The terrorist attacks in 1993 and 2001 as well as more recent foiled plots are the most compelling reasons for New York City to receive a greater share of UASI dollars. No other city in America has had as many homeland security challenges as New York and our people have dealt courageously with every adversity they have faced. The U.S. government cannot continue to let us down."

In addition to UASI funding, the Senators sought reauthorization of the Department of Homeland Security's "target hardening" program, which has provided grants of up to \$100,000 to help New York City and Buffalo area schools, hospitals, libraries and religious institutions purchase and install security systems.

This week's visit was the Senate Democrats' second trip to Washington, D.C. in recent months. The current gathering follows a series of meetings State Senate Democrats had in June with members of New York's Congressional delegation and several other key Democratic elected leaders to hammer out an agenda rooted in shared goals.

"It is unfortunate that while Albany remains in a state of legislative paralysis, those of us seeking real progress have had to turn to our nation's Capital in order to

achieve real results for New York State," Smith said. "It is time for Albany legislators to get back to work so that New York can be a place where families live, grow and thrive."

On Thursday, Senate Democrats launched a campaign urging a return to session on October 22 so that the Legislature can act on important measures like paid family leave, judicial pay raises and property tax rebates for seniors.

In addition to Homeland Security, the coalition of 17 Senate Democrats visiting Washington today plan to lobby members of Congress to override President Bush's veto of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). They also seek reforms to shield borrowers from predatory home mortgage lending practices.

New York State Senators Martin Connor (D-Brooklyn/Manhattan), Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn) and Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Flushing) also participated in efforts to advocate for Homeland Security funds.