



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Republicans Block Senate Democrats' Efforts To Protect Senior Meals-on-wheels Programs And Senior Centers

MALCOLM A. SMITH June 15, 2008

ALBANY, NY – On June 12, 2008 Senate Republicans blocked a proposal by Democrats to protect the Meals-on-Wheels program and Senior Center services in New York City, by voting against allowing the measure to come to the floor for debate or a vote.

The measure, Senate Bill 8153A/A.10470A, sponsored by Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) and co-sponsored by Senator Ruben Diaz (D-Bronx), et al, was introduced as a hostile amendment to a Senate Republican Bill by Senator Martin Golden, S.322 (R-Brooklyn). The Democratic measure would have delayed the implementation of New York City Department for the Aging's (DFTA) so-called "restructuring" of senior services, including Meals-on-Wheels.

Advocates fear that the planned consolidation of services could limit seniors' ability to access healthy meals and other critical services, and that dozens of local, front-line senior centers, serving tens of thousands of seniors, could be lost.

The Smith-Diaz measure would have barred New York City officials from proceeding with its consolidation of senior programs, including Meals-on-Wheels, until a thorough review of the program is completed.

"I understand the need to modernize and improve our senior services delivery system but

the New York City Department for the Aging is failing in this effort," said Senator Smith. "DFTA's plans to centralize neighborhood senior centers are truly frightening, and could result in the loss of dozens of local, front-line centers that serve tens of thousands of seniors every day."

Instead of allowing any discussion or debate on the amendment, the Senate Republicans used a procedural maneuver to block consideration and quickly voted to close debate on the matter.

"It is a sad day for seniors who depend on these programs, and it's a sad day for all New Yorkers who believe that the legislature should be a place where ideas are debated openly, not swept under the rug," Smith said. "We owe the people of this state more than what they got today."

New York City Republican Senators who voted to block the amendment were: Senators Martin Golden (R-Brooklyn), Andrew Lanza (R-Staten Island), Frank Padavan (R-Queens) and Serphin Maltese (R-Queens).