



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith Announces Breakthrough Agreements On Congestion Pricing, Campaign Finance Reform And Property Tax Relief For Seniors

MALCOLM A. SMITH July 18, 2007

State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens) today announced that elected leaders reached an historic agreement on a congestion pricing plan to alleviate traffic in New York City and legislation lowering limits on campaign contributions. Smith and the other leaders also agreed on a framework to provide a property tax cut for seniors making \$67,850 or less.

"Today we have reached a breakthrough on legislation that will protect our environment and our children's health, provide seniors with relief from the burden of high property taxes and establish rules to clean up the cash culture of influence in elections statewide," Smith said.

"One of the bills agreed to today, congestion pricing, is nothing short of historic in its scale and vision for improving life in New York," said Smith, whose Senate Democratic Conference received New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg on Monday as he made his pitch to Albany lawmakers to adopt the unprecedented transportation plan just before a special legislative session.

The original plan proposed by Mayor Bloomberg would charge drivers a fee for entering a zone of Manhattan below 86th Street, a high-traffic region that receives approximately 800,000 cars and trucks daily. He proposed a toll of \$8 for cars and \$21 for trucks, though that proposal is subject to change.

Under the current agreement, the mayor would be authorized to present a congestion pricing plan "within a zone of severe traffic congestion in Manhattan," though it is not explicitly limited to a region south of 86th Street, as Mayor Bloomberg had originally proposed. In addition to helping the environment, passing the legislation would also enable the City to apply for up to an estimated \$500 million in federal funding to expand public transportation, Smith said.

"This plan will not only reduce traffic in the City, but it will also help clean up air pollution that is directly linked to health conditions like asthma while removing barriers to economic development by making commercial centers of Manhattan more accessible," Smith said.

The legislation also creates a 17-member New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission comprised of appointments made by state and City officials to develop an implementation plan. The plan is subject to the approval of the New York City Council and the State Legislature by March 31, 2008.

The campaign finance legislation agreed to today would reduce contributions to statewide, Senate and Assembly candidates. It also would close the corporate subsidiary loophole and limit other ways that donors circumvent contribution limits. No longer will candidates be able to receive contributions from LLCs (Limited Liability Corporations) that have little or no assets, income, or which are newly created. The legislation also establishes rigorous disclosure standards.

Smith noted that when the Senate broke for summer recess in June, a number of bills awaiting action were left behind, prompting his call to extend session until agreements were reached on legislative priorities like campaign finance reform.

"While I hoped we could have dealt with these matters during Monday's special session, I am pleased that the Governor and leaders of both houses are now seeing eye-to-eye on issues of vast importance to the people of our state," Smith said. "If passed, these bills alone will have a profound impact on the life of virtually every New Yorker."

These agreements, Smith said, make considerable strides in reforming the business-as-usual culture in Albany, which the Senate Democrats have long fought to change.

"This is a breath of fresh air for the people of New York," Smith said of the breakthrough agreement. "It demonstrates that Albany gets it and can get the job done."