



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Democrats Call On Republican Colleagues To Meet Half Way On Paid Family Leave Bill

MALCOLM A. SMITH June 11, 2008



With Father's Day this Sunday, Senate Democrats are calling on the Republican Majority to move legislation to the floor guaranteeing Paid Family Leave to New Yorkers before the end of session.

State Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith is heading the end of session charge with the entire 30-member Democratic Conference, each of whom signed a letter addressed to Senator Thomas Morahan (R-New City) in support of S.8428.

With 30 Senate Democrats and four Republicans for the bill, there is enough Senate support to sign the bill to law if Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R-Brunswick) would bring it to the floor.

“This is not a time for partisan politics. This is a time for something that is good for the people and good for our families. This is a family issue, it has nothing to do with one-upmanship. It’s about a new born child that deserves attention and an elderly family member that needs assistance,” said Senate Minority Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens).

Senate Democrats urged Senator Morahan to move the bill this session. The Assembly passed a similar bill sponsored by Speaker Sheldon Silver last year. It was passed the last day of the 2007 legislative session.

“This bill is about our families, it is about our parents, about our children. It is about helping our family in a time of need and making sure that our professional responsibilities can be put aside for the time being while we take care of our families,” said Senator Craig Johnson (D-Nassau).

This June marks the second consecutive year Senate Democrats have called for the passage of Paid Family Leave legislation proposed by Morahan. While federal protections are in place like the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), guaranteeing workers 12 weeks unpaid leave to care for the sick or newborns, many families can’t afford to take the time off without pay, said Senator Johnson.

The Paid Family Leave proposal would use the Disability Benefits Law, within the Worker’s Compensation Law to provide for the paid benefit. The proposal would amend the law’s definition of disability to include family leave. Purposes for leave would include: caring for an ill parent, child, spouse, domestic partner or grandchild, or to bond with a new born or

newly placed foster child.

Without paid leave in New York families are forced to weigh their personal lives against their professional lives. The scales are rapidly tipping in favor of the later, said Johnson.

Many New Yorkers can't afford to go without a paycheck and because of that elderly parents may not get the attention they need and parent-child relationship could suffer; or worse, fail to develop.

More than 50 percent of Americans are not offered paid family leave at their jobs, said Dan Cantor, Executive Director of the Working Families Party of New York. So far, three states have established Paid Family Leave, California, Washington and New Jersey, who passed the legislation last month.

"It's time to give working families a hand up in a time of need. This is a bill that can get done. The Assembly passed it last year, Senator Morahan has a bill in now. We are getting close and we need to get it closer still," said Cantor.

Morahan's bill has four other Republican sponsors in the senate. Senate Democrats are calling on Senator Bruno to join Republican Senate colleagues, Joseph Robach (Rochester), Serphin Maltese (Queens) and Caesar Trunzo (Brentwood), in support of Paid Family Leave.

Senator Smith added: "We have a formula for Paid Family Leave and my colleagues are on board. We just need Senator Bruno to cross the aisle and take a stance."