



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Democrats Start "Get Back To Work" Campaign To Stop Power Gridlock In Albany

Malcolm A. Smith

October 10, 2007



New York—New York State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) was joined by advocacy groups and Senate Democrats in announcing the "Get Back to Work" campaign calling on legislative leaders and the Governor to put aside their political differences and start working on important legislation pending in Albany.

The Legislature is scheduled to go into a special session on October 22, but Senate Republicans continue to focus their efforts on boycotting our agenda by threatening not to show up while dozens of important issues remain unresolved.

"Today we are starting a campaign asking New Yorkers to call on their leaders in the Senate and Assembly as well as the Governor to demand immediate action on crucial issues concerning the economy and the health of our children," Smith said. "We need to find a way to put aside our political differences and conduct the state's business."

Senate Democrats are urging the Legislature to take up important issues, particularly in the area of economic development. Yesterday, a report on New York State's fiscal outlook from Comptroller Tom DiNapoli's office reminded us that "To close a budget deficit in this year's budget, the State borrowed more than 22 percent of the total budget or \$11.5 billion for budget relief or deficit financing."

In response to the urgent need for action, Smith and Senate Democrats will be taking part in a statewide tour to get the people of the State more involved in voicing their concerns to legislative leaders and the Governor about Albany's inaction.

As is well known, job loss upstate has been one of the great social and economic tragedies of recent years. Inaction by New York State only compounds the problem and precipitates other special economic challenges in later years, which may be even more insurmountable.

Current statistics suggest that Upstate Region lost on average 6,873 Jobs annually between 2000 and 2006. Total Job loss for the Region exceeds 11,000 Jobs annually. As a result of these job losses, the Region also lost in excess of \$293 Million each year in direct wage. With the multiplier effect, the Total Revenue lost is estimated at

\$557 Million annually.

Partisan gridlock has delayed discussion on much-needed funding for capital projects, keeping off the table \$900 million on economic development and job creation proposals for Upstate and Downstate regions. These proposals include the creation of a new venture capital pool within the common retirement fund for: environmental, the agriculture equipment revolving loan fund; farmer's school property tax credit, and the expansion of regional markets downstate for New York grown products, among other initiatives.

"We applaud the Senate Democrats for wanting to get back to work, and urge their Republican colleagues to do the same," said Sandra A. Parker, president and CEO of the Rochester Business Alliance, an Upstate regional chamber of commerce.

"Continuing to delay discussion on such things as capital projects spending and the confirmation of Dan Gundersen as Upstate economic development commissioner only serves to hurt our already struggling regional economy. We need Albany to come together and give Upstate -- and the entire state -- the attention it needs and its citizens deserve."

Pamela Bennett, NYC Director of Citizen Action of New York said: "We stand with Senate Minority Leader Malcolm Smith and the Legislators who are ready to go back to work on October 22nd. It's time to close the curtain on political theatre and have our representatives do the job they are sent to Albany to do: pass laws that address the needs of the hard working people of New York."

Stuart Appelbaum, President of the RWDSU said, "I add my voice, on behalf of the RWDSU members that live and work in New York, to call on Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno to get back to the business of legislating. It is time to put partisan politics aside and address the important issues facing the working men and women of this state, like enacting Paid Family Leave, increasing access to affordable health care and creating good paying jobs."

Last June, the Democratic Conference called for an extension of the year's Legislative Session to complete unfinished business including Campaign Finance Reform, Paid Family Leave, Judicial Pay Raises and other important issues. "But

instead of an extended legislative working session we got a summer of political circus acts between Senate Republicans and the executive branch," continued Smith.

As a result of this unhealthy political rivalry, Senate Republicans have purposely delayed for months the legislative nomination of more than 80 of Spitzer's appointees, creating a difficult situation in the management of dozens of state agencies, including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

During Gov. George Pataki's administration, the Republican-controlled Senate never raised questions about gubernatorial nominees and quickly confirmed the administration's political friends. By the end of Pataki's first regular session (June 1995), Pataki had submitted 91 total nominations. 85 of those were confirmed (93%). And by this time in his first term (end of October 1995), Pataki had submitted 146 total nominations (including those above). 144 of those were confirmed (98.6%).

Of 219 nominations that Governor Spitzer has sent over to the Senate, we have confirmed 133 for a confirmation rate of 60%.

For several weeks, Senate Democrats have insisted that the allegations that Joseph Bruno abused state aircraft privileges, and the questions raised about the ethics of maneuvers by the governor's office -- issues already settled by two independent investigations -- should not be taken as an excuse to paralyze government.

Senate Democrats announced that they are ready to go to Albany on October 22nd or earlier and remain there as long as necessary to get the job done.