



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Democrats Bring "Get Back To Work" Campaign To Long Island

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New York State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) and Senator Craig Johnson (D-Nassau) brought the Democratic Conference's "Get Back to Work" campaign to North Hempstead today, the latest stop in a statewide tour to rally public outcry about Albany's legislative deadlock and to urge passage of priority bills during the upcoming October 22 special session.

"Many of us just recently came back from Washington, D.C., and it seems like we are going to a lot of other places instead of where the people want us to be: in Albany," said Smith referring to a trip he and several Senate Democrats made earlier this week to the nation's capital where they lobbied Congressional leaders for New York State interests, including Homeland Security funding, passage of a joint federal-state children's health care program and mortgage lending reforms.

"Though I have no problem going to Washington to push our state's agenda, I would rather be in Albany working on much-needed legislation," Smith said.

Johnson said: "It is not enough for Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno to make empty overtures, calling us back to session with no clear indication of what he expects the Senate to accomplish. His Republican majority continues to offer no meaningful agenda and have shown that they are content leaving important legislation that will benefit all New Yorkers to sit in a drawer while they wage a desperate and bitter campaign to hold onto power. The people of New York do not deserve this, nor will they tolerate it."

As part of their "Get Back to Work" campaign, which included stops yesterday in Buffalo and Rochester, Senate Democrats are asking residents throughout the state to fill out postcards and voice their opinions about the direction of state government by sending messages to the campaign e-mail: getbacktoworkny@gmail.com.

Postcards can be found in the offices of local elected officials and advocate groups that have endorsed the campaign. Senate Democrats will also launch an on-line ad effort urging voters to raise their voice about the issues.

Smith urged Senate Republicans to put partisanship aside, return to Albany on October 22 as scheduled and work on approving a capital project budget, a long list of gubernatorial appointments awaiting confirmation, Wick's Law reform, paid family leave and campaign finance reform.

Partisan gridlock has delayed action on much-needed funding for capital projects, leaving \$900 million in economic development and job creation proposals to languish, including the creation of a new venture capital pool within the common retirement fund for such purposes as: environmental initiatives, an agriculture equipment revolving loan fund, the expansion of regional markets downstate for New York-grown products, among other initiatives.

In June, the Democratic Conference called for an extension of last 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 direct result of an unproductive political rivalry, Senate Republicans have for months purposely delayed the nomination of more than 80 of Gov. Spitzer's

appointees, disrupting the management of dozens of state agencies, including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority that so many Long Island commuters depend upon.

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

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

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

Senate Democrats said they are ready to go to Albany on October 22 and remain there as long as necessary to get the job done.