



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

State Senator Kevin Parker votes for Rockefeller Drug Law Reform

KEVIN S. PARKER April 3, 2009

RIPS REPUBLICANS FOR VOTING AGAINST PUBLIC SAFETY

(Albany, NY) On Thursday, April 2, 2009, Senate Democrats passed the Public Protection/General Government budget bill, which included historic reforms to the so-called “Rockefeller Drug Laws.” The Rockefeller Drug Laws imposed mandatory prison sentences on drug users, without allowing judicial discretion for extenuating circumstances, and lumped together casual or even first-time drug users with hard-core drug dealers and kingpins.

Senate Democrats, in partnership with the Assembly and Governor Paterson, supported reasonable reforms that give judges and prosecutors more discretion in sentencing, and provided funding for drug treatment and other diversionary programs. In addition, Senate Democrats passed important funding increases for public safety, homeland security and law enforcement, which will protect our quality of life during our current economic downturn.

Senator Kevin Parker (21st Senate District and Majority Whip) issued the following statement, echoing his floor statement in support of the bill, where he voiced his support for reform, and criticized the Republican Minority for voting against important public safety and law enforcement initiatives.

“As a longtime supporter of reforming the Rockefeller-era drug laws, I am proud to have cast my vote to change an unjust system that divided families and did little to treat addiction, reduce drug use, or fight drug-related crime.

“But the Public Protection/General Government budget bill included more than just drug law reform, and it is important legislators support public safety in word, deed, and with their votes.

“Let’s set the record straight. Senate Republicans used fear and diversion to oppose reasonable changes to the law for 40 years. Last night, they once again invoked some of the worst stereotypes and imagery in their opposition to much-needed reform. Worse, Senate Republicans went one step further, and played politics with our public safety by voting against critical criminal justice and victim services funding.

“The record now shows Senate Republicans voted against:

- 1,391 more police officers on New York streets – with funds leveraged through Federal Stimulus dollars.
- \$150 million in additional funding for the state’s Homeland Security Department.
- \$4 million for the creation of a new Gun Violence Reduction Program.
- \$1.2 million increase for programs supporting Domestic Violence Survivors.
- \$5.4 million in additional funding for the New York State Police.

- \$58 million in increased funding for our National Guard, when some are serving today in Iraq.
- \$17.7 million in critical additional funding for our Veterans Affairs Department, which we need more than ever.

“I am proud that Senate Democrats came together to support long overdue reform, while increasing funding for public safety. The State of New York is stronger, safer, and more secure because of the votes cast by the Senate Majority, and we will continue to work to reduce crime and protect our quality of life across the state.”