



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Senator Little Urges Better Oversight of Stimulus Spending

BETTY LITTLE May 5, 2009

Greater oversight of state government's spending of federal stimulus funding is the goal of a proposal being pushed by State Senator Betty Little and her Republican Senate colleagues.

The lawmakers announced the plan at an Albany news conference, saying that transparency is needed to prevent abuses and ensure funding is distributed fairly to all regions of the state. Also, the lawmakers want a system that tracks the new jobs expected to be created as a result of stimulus spending.

"One of my biggest problems with the secretive nature of this year's budget process was the lack of information about the stimulus money," said Little. "Taxpayers have a right to know how much is being spent, what it is being spent on, the process of determining what is being funded and whether new jobs are being created.

"The amount of spending expected over the next two years is unprecedented. That requires, in my opinion, the highest standard of accountability possible."

President Barack Obama on February 17 signed into law the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Federal officials said the funding will stabilize the economy, create jobs, prevent tax increases and prevent dramatic cuts in key government

programs.

Provisions of the Senate Republican plan include a “Taxpayers Right to Know” which would require that all future meetings regarding the disbursement of federal stimulus take place in open, public meetings. These meetings would be broadcast live via the Internet, and the minutes would be made publicly available afterwards. Supporting documents would be placed online in advance of such meetings.

The accountability plan also would direct the New York State Comptroller to monitor the flow of federal stimulus funding and require coordination between the Comptroller, State Department of Labor and Empire State Development Corporation to track job creation and retention figures directly associated with stimulus spending.

Additionally, the Attorney General would be directed to investigate and prosecute suspected cases involving misuse of stimulus-related funding.