



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

## Senate Passes Bill to Strengthen Open Meetings Law

SUZI OPPENHEIMER April 21, 2009

State Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) is pleased to announce the passage of S. 3453, which strengthens the Open Meetings Law by affording the courts additional enforcement remedies for violations of the law.

“The goal of the legislation,” said Senator Oppenheimer, “is to promote public access to meetings and to discourage willful violations of the Open Meetings Law.” Under current law, a court may invalidate actions taken behind closed doors in breach of the Open Meetings Law. The new legislation provides two alternative sanctions. First, a court may impose a stay of implementation of actions taken in unlawful meetings and remand the matter for reconsideration by a public body. A court may also impose a civil penalty of up to \$500 when a public entity is found to have engaged in closed door discussions on matters of public record or concern in violation of the open meetings law.

The legislation, which was sponsored by Senator Oppenheimer, enhances openness in government proceedings and achieves greater accountability by public officials. The Assembly sponsor of the bill, Assemblywoman Susan John (D-Rochester/Chili/Riga/Rush/Wheatland) passed the measure in that house on March 18th. The bill will be delivered to the Governor for his review.

