



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Sabini and Krueger Slam the Misuse of Transportation Funds

LIZ KRUEGER June 15, 2006

Albany, NY – In the closing days of session for the New York State Legislature, State Senators John Sabini and Liz Krueger have voiced strong opposition to a bill (S.8160) that amends transportation law, expanding the use of State Multi-Modal Capitol funding to pay for operating expenditures, including pruning trees along public routes.

The State Fiscal Year 2006-07 Executive Budget provides a \$50 million annual appropriation for the Multi-Modal Program. The program uses the sale of bonds in order to meet the annual appropriation.

On the floor of the Senate, Sabini and Krueger questioned lead sponsor, Senator Martin Golden, on his justification for using money from the limited capital program funds, funds which are intended to pay for the construction and reconstructions of bridges, highways, and airports, to pay for operating needs, and why the State should take on further debt in order to cover such expenses.

"Tree pruning is a perfectly legitimate activity but there is no reason for the State to go further into debt in order to pay for this very basic operating expense," Sabini argued.

Krueger went on to say, "This is yet another example of the misuse of funds by Senate majority members. As our State's infrastructure is crumbling around us, money continues to

be sent into the districts of majority members to cover responsibilities that our state should not be paying for with loans."

With a portion of the limited annual funding provided through the capital funds program being used for purposes other than the original intent, it is possible that important infrastructure projects will not receive the immediate attention they need due to the lack of capital.

"Those who advocate diverting capital program funds away from meeting infrastructure needs, to meeting basic maintenance needs, clearly do not understand the intent of the original legislation," Krueger declared. "There are other, far wiser ways to maintain beautification projects without burdening future taxpayers, or endangering the funding of more immediate roadway and bridge projects."

Sabini added, "No economically responsible person or body would recommend this legislation—It sticks New York taxpayers with the bill later on. If we bond out pruning expenditures now, who knows what programs we will start using bond loans to pay for next."