



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senate Republicans Calls for Rules Reforms to End Albany Dysfunction

DEAN G. SKELOS June 4, 2009



With just two weeks left in the 2009 regular legislative session, Senate Republicans today called for the enactment of real rules reforms that would truly end the dysfunction that has caused the public to lose confidence in the state Legislature by increasing government openness, accountability and fairness.

Many of the reforms being proposed today were included in the Senate Minority Report on Rules Reform that was issued in April as a stronger, more expansive alternative to the limited recommendations offered by Senate Democrats.

“Senate Democrats campaigned on a theme of change, but the public now sees that change is for the worse,” Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos said. “Albany is more dysfunctional than ever and

nothing is getting done. The budget was negotiated in complete secrecy, with three New York City Democrats shutting out Republicans, shutting out the public and telling them they didn't deserve to know what was being discussed. The result was record increases in taxes and spending. The MTA bailout was negotiated in secret and the result was even more taxes on businesses and property taxpayers. The process of government will keep getting worse unless we adopt the reforms we are pushing for today."

"Rules reform must be more than a slogan. Every representative needs the ability to be able to introduce a bill, see it through for a vote, and participate in the budget process so the needs of their district are met," Senator John Bonacic (R-C-I Mount Hope) said. The reforms advanced by Senators Griffo, Winner and I accomplish those goals and should be enacted."

Reforms being proposed by Senate Republicans include:

- > A six year term limit for the Majority Leader
- > Eight year term limits for all committee chairs and ranking members;
- > Messages of necessity only used in emergency situations;
- > Create a bipartisan Legislative Budget Office to provide fiscal analysis of legislation;
- > Requiring Senators to attend committee meetings, publishing committee agendas and voting records on the Internet; webcasting committee meetings and creating a NY_SPAN television network to add context to legislative proceedings;
- > Committee membership should be proportional by party;
- > All members should have equal access to resources and all members shall receive the same allocation for staff; and
- > Limit bill introduction

"The number one goal this session was for the Senate to show the way in building a new house of cooperative action in Albany. The Senate Democratic majority offered itself as an agent of change, but it's been far from it," said Senator George Winner (R-C-I, Elmira). "This year's budget adoption process was a disgrace to open government. It was a dead-end process for too many, mostly upstate New York taxpayers, workers, employers, families, and communities. So there's plenty of work left to do to open up the legislative process to greater public scrutiny, accountability and effectiveness, but the sand's just about run out of the hourglass this session."

"An open, transparent Legislative system is an essential foundation for all of the reforms that are necessary to lower taxes and revive New York's economy," said Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-I-C, Rome). "I have supported reform from my first day in Albany. This package of much-needed reforms will end abuses of power that paralyze government and allow the voice of the people to truly be heard."

Senators Bonacic, Winner and Griffo represented the Senate Republican Conference on the Senate Temporary Committee on Rules Reform. They proposed alternatives to the Committee report delivered by the Democrats that failed to make any substantive reforms to the legislative process or function of the Senate.

"We are offering real changes that will make a difference and real reforms that will change the culture of Albany, restore accountability and bring the public back into the process by restoring openness in government," Senator Skelos said. "After six months of the kind of change brought by a Democrat-controlled Senate, The public is even more worried about the future. More people are leaving New York and taking businesses and jobs with them and that is not going to stop unless we make the kind of changes we are advocating for today."