



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Bonacic: Senator Smith and Company Fighting Reform

JOHN J. BONACIC June 12, 2009

State Senator John Bonacic (R/I/C – Mt. Hope), today said former Senator Majority Leader Malcolm Smith was “fighting reform”. Smith and his hand-picked Secretary of the Senate, who serves as the Senate’s Chief Administrative Officer, locked the file cabinets in the Senate Chamber, prohibiting the passage of the legislation contained in the cabinets. None of the legislation was particularly controversial, and mostly related to local government issues. Smith’s office indicated they did not want to attend the Senate session under new Senate rules.

“The admission by Senator Smith’s office that they did not want to go into session because they did not want to be governed by these rules shows them to be insincere on their claims of reform. Who in their right mind can criticize the new rules as anything but big improvements over the old rules,” Bonacic said.

The cornerstone of the new Senate Rules include:

- A Petition to Vote process (guaranteeing a vote on any bill on Senate Calendar if a Majority of Senators sign a Petition demanding one);
- Truly equal staffing;

- Transparency in Committee staffing allocations so that Committee staff is not selected by the Senate leadership, but rather the Committee Chairperson;
- Ensuring Committee membership is proportionate to the political makeup of the Senate, thereby prohibiting the Senate Leadership from stacking Senate Committees full of political party loyalists;
- The ability to have a “satellite” office for Senators with large Districts. Senator Bonacic’s District contains all or parts of four Counties. Senate Democrats closed Senator Bonacic’s satellite office in Delhi. Senator Bonacic has been paying privately to keep the office open. Now, satellite offices will be determined based on geography, not politics;
- Equal access to things like mail and printing services. Senate Democrats had refused to allow Republican Senators to even photocopy documents in bulk without approval of the documents in advance by the then-Democratic leadership.

“The Petition to Vote process alone is critical. Whether it is a mandated spending cap, property tax reform, changes in the MTA, or gay marriage, the Petition to Vote process is a direct route to an up or down vote on a bill whenever a majority of Senators – Republican, Democrat, or a combination, wants it. Too often, good bills languish on the Senate Calendar because the Majority Leader does not like the bill, the sponsor, or both. It is key to getting action on hot button issues that the leadership is unwilling to address,” Senator Bonacic said.

Secretary of the Senate Angelo Aponte, an appointee of Senator Malcolm Smith, is in charge of the security of the Senate. He allowed protesters to block the entrance to the Senate Chamber. Senators, staff, and others were pushed, shoved, spat upon, and bullied by the protestors that Aponte allowed in. “I am all for the right to protest peacefully. I am all for the right to protest loudly. However, blocking entrances to the Senate just because their

fellow Democrats now are sharing power instead of keeping it all to themselves is really a disgrace.”

Senator Smith – ousted on Monday as Senate Majority Leader, went to Court on Thursday to try and block the Senate from meeting. “When Senator Smith was elected Majority Leader in January, the outgoing Leader – Senator Skelos, handed him the gavel, shook his hand, congratulated him, and celebrated our democracy. When Sen. Skelos was re-elected Majority Leader, Senator Smith turned out the lights, locked the Senate doors, ran to Court, and refused to come to work.”

A State Supreme Court Judge on Thursday refused to block the Senate from going into session. Senator Smith had sought an injunction to prohibit Senator President Espada and Senate Majority Leader Skelos from holding session. Smith’s efforts were rebuffed by the Court and the Senate commenced session moments later, with all 30 Republicans present, along with two Senate Democrats who have formed the new Coalition government of the Senate.

“There is a lot New Yorkers are counting on us for: property tax relief, job creation efforts, tougher laws on drug dealers, and helping to keep our roads and bridges safe. Rather than refusing to come to work, Senator Smith needs to join with the 32 of us who want to get to work, and address the people’s business,” concluded Sen. Bonacic.

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