



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

Open Letter To Recent Senates Events

Shirley L. Huntley

June 18, 2009

Dear Constituents,

The events that have transpired in Albany since June 8th, has caused confusion, anger, and frustration among all of those who have been involved. The grab for power has caused critical legislation that would help our community as well as New York State, come to a standstill. Yet, I want to assure you that I am working in earnest to resolve this issue with my senate colleagues. For those of you who reside in my 10th Senatorial District, who may not know the full details of what occurred, I will try to convey to you what has taken place.

On June 8th, during a senate session, a resolution made in secrecy by the Minority Conference was brought up in chambers that would make Senator Pedro Espada Jr. (D-Bronx) Temporary President of the Senate and Dean G. Skelos (R-Rockville Center) Majority Leader. In their attempted efforts to pass this resolution they convinced Senator Espada and Senator Monserrate to vote with the Minority

Conference in the senate. The Majority Conference disputed the legitimacy of this vote as certain senate procedures were not followed. The hijacking of democracy for political gain was an unfortunate travesty. The Minority Conference decision to launch a coup was predicated on their belief that reform needed to occur in Albany. Ironically, when they controlled the New York State Senate for over four decades, reform was never implemented.

My colleagues in the Majority Conference and I are working together and supporting one another during these extenuating circumstances. Senator Monserrate rejoined the Majority Conference giving us a 31-31 member tie with the Minority. Since the Senate cannot operate nor pass legislation with a tie, we proposed a power sharing agreement with the Minority Conference so that the needs of New York State citizens would be met. You should know that during the past six months, with the Majority Conference leading the Senate, we successfully passed and enacted many important bills, legislation that:

1. Addressed 2008 and 2009 budget deficit
2. Created over 80,000 new jobs, including “green jobs” and targeted employment for low-income New Yorkers
3. Made New York’s tax code more progressive and fair
4. Created new reforms in healthcare policy
5. Reformed the Rockefeller Drug Laws
6. 1,400 new police officers were added to existing precincts and police departments around the state

Due to the Minority Conference insurrection in Albany, two key bills which I sponsored which would benefit our district are being held up. One of those bills is S.5562, which would help financially distressed hospitals such as Jamaica Hospital refinance their debt, so they can avoid closing. The closing of St. John’s and Mary Immaculate Hospital was a critical blow to the well being of citizens within our district. This bill would prevent future hospitals that are vital to our district from closing due to debt.

The second bill that I introduced S.5802, details that if a hospital still does not have sufficient resources to operate, and the hospital plans to close, there must be a public

hearing by the State Health Commissioner. The hearing would address the impact of the hospital's closing on access to health care in the surrounding community. Within 30 days of the hearing, the State Health Commissioner must report to the Governor and Legislature, detailing measures which would reduce the impact of the hospital's closing on the local community. These two bills would ensure that our community could voice their opinion, and prevent the reduction of access to quality healthcare to our residents. Yet, the Minority Conference's lust for power at all costs, has negatively impact our district.

A bi-partisan power sharing agreement was forwarded to the Minority Conference to help facilitate cooperation, compromise, and fairness. However, our proposal was soundly rejected by them. We will continue to negotiate with Minority Leader Dean G. Skelos and Pedro Espada Jr., to bring the Senate back to full operation. Local counties, the children of New York City, and taxpayers in general need their representatives to return to work and serve the needs of New York State effectively and efficiently.

As your elected official, I will continue to be responsive and responsible, and will always strive to help and represent you to the best of my abilities.

Thank you in advance for your support in my quest for good governance.

Sincerely,

Shirley L. Huntley

New York State Senator

10th District, Queens