



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Stephen M. Saland

Senate Reform -- A column by Senator Steve Saland

STEPHEN M. SALAND June 19, 2009



People are angry and rightly so. I am outraged. The three leaders in state government, all Democrats, all from New York City, adopted a budget that imposes \$8 billion more in taxes and fees while eliminating STAR rebate checks and increasing spending by \$18 billion – during the worst economic times since the Great Depression! Soon after we emerged from the bloody budget battle, every Senate Democrat supported the MTA bail-out that delivered another staggering blow to Dutchess County. It came in the form of additional taxes and fees, including a payroll tax that would cost businesses (including not-for-profits, school districts and local governments) and real property taxpayers millions more to subsidize a

mass transit system riddled with financial problems and little used by local residents.

For five months, the Senate Republicans debated every tax increase measure that came before us –literally pleaded with Senate Democrats to do the right thing. The irresponsible actions of the Senate Democrats are crippling businesses, leading us to higher unemployment, and causing more people to lose their homes.

One party control proved disastrous for New York State.

Similarly, the government reforms promised by Senate Democrats throughout the 2008 campaign proved to be empty promises. In fact, Senator Liz Krueger, of Manhattan who is a member of the Democrat conference stated her own frustration in a letter to 30,000 of her constituents saying "*I think all of us in the Democratic Conference have to look at what role we played in what went wrong. I believe that the biggest failure of my conference was that it was not aggressive enough in advancing a reform agenda.*" Senator Krueger went on to say, "*I believe many of my colleagues adopted a 'to the victor goes the spoils' model.*"

The new Senate Democrat regime gave us little choice but to act on behalf of those who elected us to serve. We heard the pleas from overburdened taxpayers, the unemployed, the business owners who are being forced to move and we acted.

In order to stop the hemorrhaging, the Senate Republicans and two Democrats joined forces to protect the interests of the taxpayers of this State. We could not sit idly by and watch as spending and taxing continued to escalate beyond control.

A bipartisan coalition emerged bringing about a change in Senate Leadership. Dramatic reforms were adopted bringing long overdue equity to Senate operations and most importantly ensuring that regions outside of New York City are not ignored. The Hudson Valley and Upstate New York must be at the table.

Thus far, the result is far from ideal. We now have a 31-31 member gridlock. Senate business has come to a screeching halt with Democrats refusing to attend session. It is critical to the state of New York that we put aside partisan politics and work together. We need to give the reform we voted on a chance and I urge my colleagues in the Senate Democrat conference to come forward to work on the business we were all elected to do.