



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Op-Ed Senate Stalemate

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR June 29, 2009

Two weeks ago, as the Democratic Conference prepared an end-of-session push to pass vital legislation before the State Senate commences, the GOP was also busy at work -- plotting an illegal coup in an attempt to overthrow the State Senate.

They have refused to acknowledge that the current 31-31 split in our chamber requires compromise, and are intent on trying to seize power they are not entitled to, even if it means holding the residents of New York State hostage.

Our conference remains poised to pass critical and time sensitive legislation that simply can't be put aside. Instead, the Republicans refuse to come to a sensible, fair and bi-partisan power sharing agreement to finish the people's business.

We need an agreement now, and the people of New York agree in resounding numbers. The most recent polls indicate that 79 percent of New Yorkers are in favor of either Democratic or bi-partisan control of the Senate, with more people placing their trust in the Democratic Party as the best able to deliver needed reform.

We must listen to the voices of the 19 million people we were elected to represent. It is time to put partisan politics aside, and get back to work. What the Democrats have offered is the best solution to return to governing, and is modeled after how eight other states, as well as

the U.S. Senate, have effectively handled this situation.

We have proposed real, fair and immediate bi-partisan action to end the gridlock Republicans brought to Albany. The Republicans, led by renegade Democrat Pedro Espada, responded with a plan that rejects bipartisanship and gives Pedro Espada autonomous control of the Senate.

Just as the courts have asked us to do, we have continued our attempts, both publicly and privately, to end this stalemate by offering revised proposals to Pedro Espada and GOP Senator Dean Skelos. Yet, they continue to refuse any agreement short of complete power over a chamber that they were not elected to run.

Recently, the Republicans have taken to holding mock “sessions,” in which they claim to be doing work.

A quorum – or 32 Senators – is clearly stated in the New York Constitution as the minimum number of Senators required to conduct legislative business. Without 32 Senators present, these sessions are a mockery and an embarrassment to our democracy, and we will continue to refuse to participate in staged political theatrics.

What we will do, is work with the GOP to come to a fair solution, because we know it is in the best interest of the people of New York.

The consequence of inaction in this situation is far too great to sit idly by. As we work to restore our economy, we must pass dozens of bills to extend the ability of local governments to levy sales taxes that help to fund schools, roads and local law enforcement services. We need to extend the Power for Jobs program that provides low-cost electricity

to businesses and non-profit groups across the state. We need to pass legislation to allow

over \$1.75 billion in federal stimulus and education funds to flow to local school districts across the state.

There is also highly time sensitive legislation that needs to be brought to a vote in order to protect New York City schools, strengthen ethics reform and provide for heightened reproductive rights.

The Elections Committee, which I Chair, is also poised and ready to bring to the floor for a vote legislation which would fundamentally restructure campaign finance in New York, allow military voters additional time to cast an absentee ballot, make poll-sites more accessible, and bring greater ease and transparency to the entire elections process.

All this good work has been put on hold, and all this work means nothing if the Republicans continue in their protest of even the most reasonable compromises. I ask any reasonable Republican, interested in the good of the people over the good of the party, to join us in getting this work done.

We have offered real bi-partisan sharing of the operation of the Senate Session, the legislative process, and the Floor Leadership. Now it is time for the Republican's to show they are more concerned with the future of their state than a power grab.

New Yorkers have a right to be concerned about the ability of state government to function effectively in this crisis, but I can ensure my constituents that those in the Democratic Conference will not rest or retire until a resolution has been achieved.