



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Serrano and Advocates See Advances in Stimulus Accountability

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Albany, NY- Over the past several months, Senator José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx), Assemblyman Michael Gianaris (D-Queens) and the NYS Stimulus Oversight Group have led an initiative to ensure that Federal Stimulus funds are utilized with utmost efficiency. A Stimulus Oversight Panel launched yesterday by Governor Paterson incorporates many of the major components of a bill introduced by Serrano and Gianaris.

The legislation (S5879/A8941) aimed to make New York the most reliable recipient of federal stimulus funds in the country by establishing an independent Ombudsman's office to help disburse and track the impact of Federal stimulus funds.

"I applaud Governor Paterson's proactive approach on this issue and believe that the creation of a stimulus oversight panel will play a vital role in the resurgence of our economy," said Senator Serrano. "Due to the Senate leadership battle, our legislation was never able to gain proper traction. Therefore, I am pleased that the Governor would incorporate many of the ideas from our bill in crafting the panel.

"However, there is still much work to be done. The legislation I introduced in the Senate sought to establish performance standards for evaluation purposes. This ensures that the decision-making process will continue to evolve and always remain responsive to the needs of the people of New York. In essence, the legislation would seek to ensure that the State practices not just oversight, but also foresight." said Serrano.

New York is expected to receive \$27 billion to revitalize its economy under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Under the direction of the Governor, the stimulus oversight panel will seek to prevent waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement, ensuring that funds are distributed in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner.

"The stimulus oversight panel will be a powerful mechanism to ferret out waste, fraud and abuse. The inclusion of the Division of Human Rights as a member of this panel sends a particularly salient message that the state is looking to ensure stimulus funds are not only distributed effectively but that it is done equitably," said Chris Keeley, Associate Director of Common Cause/New York, which convenes the NYS Stimulus Oversight Working Group.

"Looking forward, a stimulus ombudsman would provide a powerful partner for the panel, as the ombudsman would not only monitor, but also evaluate how effectively stimulus funds are used, strategically positioning New York as the country's most effective, efficient and equitable state in distribution of stimulus funds."