



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Winner: Enacted Reforms Good for Upstate

GEORGE WINNER July 16, 2009



Albany, N.Y.—State Senator George Winner (R-C-I, Elmira), a member of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration that convened earlier this year to begin laying the groundwork for the far-reaching legislative reforms that have now been approved, called the fight for changing the Senate “incredibly contentious and frustrating, but we’ve finally broken dramatic new ground in New York government. It’s very positive for the upstate region, and it absolutely needed to be done.”

Winner said that the Senate reforms are the direct result of this year's widely criticized state budget – and budget adoption process – that led a coalition of senators, including Winner and every upstate Republican, to demand change.

“This year's budget adoption process was a disgrace to open government. It was a dead-end process for too many, mostly upstate New York taxpayers, workers, employers, families, and communities,” Winner said. “So we've acted to open up the legislative process to greater public scrutiny, accountability, effectiveness, and more reform than we've ever had in Albany.”

Winner joined Republican and Democratic colleagues early this morning to adopt numerous new Senate rules that take power away from legislative leaders and empower rank-and-file legislators from every region, including initiatives to:

- impose 8-year term limits for legislative leaders and committee chairs;
- diminish the power of legislative leaders by making it easier for individual senators to bring legislation before the full Senate for a final vote, a dramatic change to the “leadership dominated” system that has long defined Albany politics;
- ensure that the membership on Senate committees reflects the majority-minority breakdown of the Senate as a whole. The new rules also give committee chairs and ranking members more autonomy; and
- create a cable-TV legislative channel to broadcast daily legislative sessions and hearings, post online voting records for individual legislators, and take other actions to subject the work of the Legislature to greater public scrutiny.

At the beginning of the 2009 legislative session, Winner was one of three Republicans named to a nine-member Committee on Rules and Administration and joined his colleagues in first proposing many of the approved changes. Winner said that the bipartisan panel, which has been extended through the end of the year, needs to continue working to monitor the implementation of the Senate reforms and to keep recommending additional ways to enhance the Senate's rules and procedures.

"We've set the reform bar high right out of the box, but we need to march as far as we can in breaking new ground," said Winner, who added that he will continue pushing for forthcoming actions to implement a cap on state spending, provide relief to overburdened upstate property taxpayers, and put in place an aggressive strategy to jumpstart the upstate economy.

"Upstate New York employers, workers, families, taxpayers, and communities have been left holding the shortest end of the stick this session, and that has to change," said Winner. "We need to restart common sense policies to rebuild the upstate economy, protect our taxpayers, and create more opportunities for small business owners, our workers and their families. That work started today, because now we've laid the foundation for a stronger upstate presence in this government. But for upstate legislators, the fight is far from over and the work far from done."

[Watch the video.](#)