



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Committee on Reform Led by Senator Bonacic Brings Reform to Senate

JOHN J. BONACIC July 17, 2009

State Senator John J. Bonacic (R/I/C – Mt. Hope), today announced the adoption of rules reforms in the Senate he has been pushing for several years.

Senator Bonacic said, "For years I have fought for reform, criticizing my own party's leadership for the very unfair way they ran the Senate. This year, with Democrats in control, I continued to call for these necessary changes. Today, we have adopted, after years of efforts, substantive bi-partisan reform the Senate has long needed."

The reforms, modeled almost entirely after the April, 2009 report authored by Senator Bonacic include:

- * Petition for a Public Hearing. Perhaps the most important reform, this bill will allow members of the Senate to sign a petition requiring a vote on a bill. Currently that power lies strictly with the Senate Majority Leader or in procedural, party line votes;
- * Member items, long a source of dysfunction in the Senate, will be divided between the two conferences (Democrat and Republican) proportionately to the makeup of the Senate, meaning Senate Districts will no longer gain or lose funding depending on the political enrollment of their Senator;

- * Statewide budget hearings starting in each October to help plan regional State budget priorities;
- * State resources will be distributed more fairly and equitably to our communities;
- * Equal allocations for Senate office staff enabling fair service to constituents;
- * The mandatory consideration of bills in Committee upon the request of the Senate sponsor;
- * Video and web casting of Senate committee meetings and posting Senate Committee documents online.

"The need to reform State government has never been more evident than in the last month of the Senate stalemate. These reforms can lead to votes on property tax reform, cutting taxes for families and small business, and making health insurance more affordable. The new rules will ensure that state resources will be distributed more fairly and equitably to our communities. If these reforms enable votes on these issues which matter greatly to New Yorkers, then the last month of the Senate stalemate, however frustrating, and unseemly uncomfortable, may have been worth it. The proof will only come in when those votes happen," Bonacic said.

Senator Bonacic also said he intended to circulate a petition demanding a vote on legislation he is co-sponsoring to create a real property tax circuit breaker which refunds property taxes paid by middle class families in excess of average amounts. "In the Mid-Hudson, homeowners are paying well above the average of State residents in the amount of school taxes we pay versus our income. I am hopeful that the Senate would have voted for tax reform already, but I intend to force the issue now that these rules give us the opportunity if no vote occurs," Bonacic said.

"Reforming the Senate Rules hardly sounds interesting. It can however, have very real consequences in enabling votes on key issues – which is what really matters. People want results. I call upon the State Assembly to now come to the table and adopt the model Rules implemented by the Senate so we can guarantee votes can be held in the Assembly on these important issues as well. New Yorkers deserve a competent government that brings results. These rules reforms can be a major contributor to that long overdue problem," concluded Senator John Bonacic.

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