



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Statement from Senator Serrano on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation

JOSÉ M. SERRANO December 8, 2009

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(Albany, NY)- On Wednesday December 2, 2009, Senator José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx) and his Senate colleagues worked with Governor David Patterson to approve a bipartisan Deficit Reduction Plan (DRP) aiming to protect jobs, prevent tax hikes and save critical school funding. "Responsible cuts were necessary, but we were able to 'cut with care' by protecting funding for health care and education- without placing an additional burden on the taxpayer," said Serrano. "It is not necessary to sacrifice jobs, the education of our children, or the health of our communities in order to get back on sound fiscal footing."

As the Chair of the Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation Committee, Senator Serrano today discussed how the approved Deficit Reduction Plan will affect Arts, Tourism, and Parks agencies and organizations across New York State. "When budget cuts are made, Parks and the Arts are often among the first to be sacrificed. I am proud to say that although some cuts were necessary this year, we were able to maintain the budget for living museums intact, offset cuts to NYSCA with previously directed legislative grants, and kept the cuts on municipal parks down to 2 percent."

NYSCA FUNDING

The New York State Council on The Arts' (NYSCA) budget had been restored to almost \$4 million under Serrano's leadership as Chair of the Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks & Recreation Committee. The Deficit Reduction plan will cut \$384,000 of NYSCA's funding. However, earlier this year Senator Serrano, in an unprecedented step, directed \$250,000 of his discretionary funds back to NYSCA.

"Last year NYSCA endured painful cuts that affected many cultural organizations in the State of New York," said Serrano. "This year I directed \$250,000 of my discretionary funds back to NYSCA. My hope is that this will offset some of the potential cuts to vital programs by important arts institutions. The arts have had a transformative effect on the communities of New York State, and when Arts institutions suffer all New Yorkers are negatively affected."

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND

The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), a fund that covers large, one-time purchases such as land for parks and historic preservations, received \$212 million. New York State Living museums and Municipal Parks both receive funding from the EPF.

Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquariums (Living Museums)

The Deficit Reduction Plan did not produce any cuts in the budget for the state's living museums, which are still receiving \$9 million. "Although no cultural institution should endure cuts, living museums are especially susceptible to the effects of slashing the budget, due to the fact that the attractions they provide often require watering, feeding, and in many

cases have medical needs." stated Serrano.

"These institutions provide countless jobs to members of our communities, and have valuable educational programming," said Serrano. "Living museums must not only be kept afloat, but allowed to thrive. As they flourish, so do the communities around them. I am very pleased that they are not experiencing any cuts under the DRP."

Municipal Parks

Funding for the state's Municipal Parks was cut by 2 percent. "All cuts are significant, especially when they involve the playgrounds used by our children, the tracks we run on daily, and the sports fields we share as a community," said Serrano. "Yet the necessary cuts were fiscally prudent, and will allow important new and existing programs to continue to provide green space, improve our health, and strengthen our neighborhoods."

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