



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

SENATOR ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS: SENATE REFORMS ENACTED; State Senate More Transparent & Fair; Public to be Better Informed

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS January 11, 2009

State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D/WF – 35th District) applauded the passage of several rules reform recommendations put forward by the Temporary Senate Commission on Rules Reform of which the Senator served as a member. “As a member of the Task Force, I am pleased to see many of the Task Force recommendations have been enacted and the result will improve efficiency, transparency, and fairness in the State Senate. This is a crucial step along the road to real, substantive government reform,” stated Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins said that the reforms approved by the Senate include

- Procedural reforms such as: implementing term limits for Officers and Leaders of the Senate of eight years; allowing individual Senators, upon the vote of a majority of Senators, to have a bill placed on an active list; requiring that non-sponsor amendments to be accepted by the sponsor and requiring a vote of the majority of the Senators elected; and, increasing public notice by publishing the active list of bills to be voted on the prior day.

- Committee process reforms such as: limiting the term of Committee Chairs to 8 years; requiring committee membership to be proportional to each Conference's representation of the Senate as a whole; allowing Committee chairs and ranking members to hire their own committee staff independent of leadership; implementing a new Committee discharge process; authorizing the continuance of the Rules Reform Task Force to develop further reform; and, implementing committee guidelines to encourage greater public participation.
- Reform for greater openness and transparency such as: disclosing information including making records of committees, agendas, votes, minutes, reports, attendance, fiscal notes, transcripts, calendars, and expenditure reports available on the website; recording and broadcasting committee meetings and hearings; and making Senate proceedings accessible through the website.
- Resource Distribution reform such as: providing a more equitable distribution of resources to provide individual Senators with a greater ability to effectively represent their constituents; allowing all 62 Senators to have equal access to mail and printing services; and requiring a more equitable distribution of community grants for each Senate district.

“When I ran for the 35th Senate District, I ran on a platform of real reform. I have consistently been an advocate for laws that ensure accountability and correct disenfranchisement and inequality, as well as an advocate for Senate rules which distribute resources fairly to ensure that our collective constituency of ALL New Yorkers are best served by their government as a whole. With the historic enactment of these reform measures, I am pleased that many of these goals have been realized,” concluded Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.