



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Winner on State Budget: Behind Closed Doors, Again?

GEORGE WINNER March 5, 2010

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Albany, N.Y.—With less than one month remaining until the April 1 deadline to adopt a new state budget, State Senator George Winner (R-C-I, Elmira) criticized today the Legislature’s lack of public negotiations over the final 2010-2011 state budget.

“There’s a glaring lack of progress in budget negotiations, and I’m concerned about where we’re going to end up,” said Winner. “I realize that Governor Paterson and the Democratic leaders of the Legislature have been fighting political fire after political fire, but there’s work

to do. Time is getting short to put in place one of the most important state budgets that we've ever faced. We should at least have a full public airing of the choices at hand, but that's not happening. I'm concerned that this year's budget adoption process is heading in the direction of last time around when the governor and the Democratic leaders of the Senate and Assembly went behind closed doors, made the decisions they wanted to make, and then went ahead and enacted their plans into law."

Winner said that Senate and Assembly leaders are violating key elements of the state's "Budget Reform Act of 2007," which Winner helped develop and co-sponsored. The 2007 budget reform law established legal guidelines and timetables for the appointment of joint legislative budget conference committees to conduct public budget negotiations – all of which, Winner said, were ignored by legislative leaders last year and are being ignored again.

"The Legislature is required to hold joint budget conference committees to provide a full public airing of the challenges and choices we're facing," Winner said. "What about a more aggressive, renewed effort to combat Medicaid fraud and waste? Will upstate roads and bridges be addressed fairly and equitably in this year's budget? Will school resource officers be eliminated? What's in store for the future of the New York Wine & Grape Foundation? What about the future of New York's system of state parks? If the Paterson administration is currently considering park closures, as it's been reported -- a move that could have a potentially devastating impact on the upstate tourism economy – is it right for such historic and far-reaching decisions to be made behind closed doors, with no public hearings or meaningful public discussion over the consequences?"

Winner said that the Senate Republican conference is offering a series of alternative budget initiatives that include a Jobs Plan, tax cuts to spark job creation, local mandate relief, a strict cap on state spending, and regulatory reform. They've also offered a plan to right size the New York bureaucracy through a series of state agency consolidations and other

administrative actions.

“But I’m fearful that state leaders are planning to rush through a budget that will lead to higher taxes and upstate job losses,” said Winner.