



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Public Budget Negotiations Needed, Winner Says

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Albany, N.Y.–State Senator George Winner (R-C-I, Elmira) has joined many of his legislative colleagues to call on Senate and Assembly leaders to begin public negotiations over the final 2010-2011 state budget.

The lawmakers noted that the April 1st deadline to adopt a new state budget is 23 days away.

Winner said that legislative 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.

Under the 2007 budget reform law, Senate and Assembly leaders are required to put out a schedule within 10 days after the governor submits his proposed budget, which Governor David Paterson did on January 19th this year. The schedule is required to set dates for:

- > requiring each house of the Legislature to approve a budget resolution detailing their priorities;
- > establishing joint, bipartisan budget conference committees for different areas of the budget;
- > scheduling open, public budget conference committee meetings to examine and settle differences on key budget measures; and
- > each conference committee to issue final reports and budget recommendations.

"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 more aggressive Medicaid oversight? 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? These historic and far-reaching decisions can't be made behind closed doors, with no public hearings or meaningful public discussion over the consequences."

Winner said that his legislative conference is offering a series of alternative budget initiatives that include a Jobs Plan, tax cuts to spark job creation, local mandate relief, Medicaid oversight reform, 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.