



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Senator Krueger & Assemblymember Kellner Propose Governor's Questions Hour

LIZ KRUEGER May 24, 2010

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(New York, NY) New legislation introduced by Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) and Assembly Member Micah Z. Kellner (D-Manhattan) will create a Governor's Questions Hour, opening up debates over the direction of the State to public scrutiny. The bill would require the Governor to stand before the Legislature for an hour each month during the legislative session to answer questions from Senators and Assembly Members, in a televised interaction similar to the British tradition of Prime Minister's Questions.

A Governor's Questions Hour would help break the logjam in Albany's political process, giving New Yorkers direct access to the discussions that shape the State's policies. By pushing political debates out into the open, it will create a remedy to the backroom dealings and bickering for which New York's State Government has become notorious.

"New Yorkers are sick of the failures that three men in a room have brought them," said Assembly Member Kellner. "People want to see an ongoing constructive dialogue between their Legislators and the Governor to move our State forward. And having a regular Questions Hour would do just that."

Senator Krueger said, "Every once in a while I have time to watch the British Prime Minister answer questions from Parliament on the BBC channel and am struck by how much information about Government is revealed through this back and forth. Wouldn't it be great to have this type of public, open dialogue between the Governor and NY State's two 'houses of Parliament'? Since these sessions would be available for TV and live webcast, we just need to have some better rules than the British about what types of fruit can and cannot be thrown. As I recall, they favor tomatoes."

The bill will give Legislators an opportunity to question the Governor about the strategic direction, financial status, and general governance of the State. It will require the Governor to stand before the Assembly and the Senate on alternating months during the legislative session, responding to inquiries from Republicans and Democrats alike. The bill specifies that the percentage of time allotted for questions from members of the majority and minority parties will be based on the percentage of representation of each party.

"Public dialogue and debate are critical to democracy," Assembly Member Kellner said. "But as it stands, there is no opportunity for Legislators and the Governor to get together on a regular basis to openly talk about the issues we're facing. New Yorkers want accountability from their elected officials—and that means putting our debates and competing ideas out in the open."

"This will be a chance for New Yorkers to see whether their representatives are really focused on the issues that matter," Assembly Member Kellner said. "A high-profile public dialogue will require the Governor and members of the Legislature to really show they understand and can defend their policies."