



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## **Statement by Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos**

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## **Governor Paterson Should Allow Rebuilding of Greek Orthodox Church at Ground Zero**

### **Paterson Focuses on Mosque, But Stalls Christian Church Project**

Governor Paterson is anxious to broker a deal for the construction of a Mosque, yet he has abruptly turned his back on a long-standing deal to rebuild the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Christian Church, the only church destroyed at Ground Zero on September 11th.

Instead of standing in the national press spotlight on the Mosque issue, Governor Paterson should shift his focus to the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas Church, which should be allowed to move forward without further delay.

Governor Paterson has repeatedly told the press that he wants to meet with all sides to resolve the construction of a Mosque, yet he has not met with the leaders of the Greek Orthodox Church to discuss rebuilding this Christian house of worship, a project that has been stalled for almost a decade.

The Governor's office has told Church leaders that the Port Authority would reach out to them to discuss the future of the project, yet months have passed and they have heard nothing.

In 2004, the Greek Orthodox Church reached an agreement with Governor George Pataki and the Port Authority for a land swap that would allow a new church to be constructed at 130 Liberty St. in Lower Manhattan.

The church was willing to meet all of the necessary conditions related to the size and construction of the church, including reducing the size, adding special

protections and security measures needed for construction near Ground Zero, and giving up the land and air rights to the church's previous location on Cedar Street.

Despite the patience and flexibility shown by the church, the Port Authority said the deal was off and has refused repeated requests to meet with church leaders to resolve the issue.

The Governor should show this Christian church that was destroyed on September 11th more consideration by respecting the existing deal, sitting down with leaders of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Port Authority, and finally clearing the way for rebuilding this church at Ground Zero.

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