



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo: “There Is No Better Time to Reform Albany Than the Present”

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR May 17, 2011

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**Queens, NY, May 15, 2011** – Answering the public’s outcry for immediate action on ethics reform, and addressing a top priority of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s agenda, **Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.** (D-Queens) joined other Senate Democratic members in hosting and addressing ethics reform for the first public forum in nearly two years. In utilizing Senate Rule VII Section 4(b) of the Senate Rules, the New York State Democratic Conference convened a public forum on legislation under the jurisdiction of the Investigations and Government Operations Committee.

The Senate members at the forum used news media and social networking tools to open up government and engage the public in an unprecedented effort to reform Albany, including broadcasting live updates on Facebook, LiveStream and Twitter, and the acceptance of real time questions from the public, which were used by Senators during the forum.

The highlighted bills within the Ethics Forum included:

Bill S.31, which establishes an independent commission on governmental ethics.

Bill S.382, which increases financial and client disclosure requirements.

Bill S.2333, which eliminates pensions of public officials convicted of misusing their office.

Bill S.3053, which restricts the personal use of campaign funds.

Bill S.1565, sponsored by Senator Addabbo, which prohibits political contributions by businesses that have been awarded state contracts.

According to Senator Addabbo, these groups of bills are essential to ethics reform. “Aside from pledges and promises, if we are to move this state government in the direction of improved ethics and creditability, then ethics and campaign finance reform are required ingredients to that end.” Addabbo stated.

Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director for the *League of Women Voters* and one of the attendees, addressed Senator Addabbo’s legislation. “Along with our good government colleagues, the League of Women Voters has consistently called for stricter restrictions on campaign contributions by those who do business with the state and lobbyists. The fact that New York has not done so has created widespread public cynicism and a belief that those who do business with the state are paying through campaign contributions to play with the state,” said Bartoletti.

Other group attendees at the public forum included the New York Public Interest Research Group, the Brennan Center for Justice, Citizen Action, Citizens Union and Common Cause.

Russ Haven, Legislative Counsel for the New York Public Interest Research Group, believes strong, clear ethic laws are needed to keep pace with the loopholes that have been exploited. Jessica Wisneski, Legislative Director of Citizen Action of New York, stated there is a transparent conflict of interest when

corporations give money to elected officials to help them win or retain their seats. To this, Senator Addabbo agreed and touched on his work to combat ethics since his 2001 term in the New York City Council. “As a New York City Councilmember and member of its Government Operations Committee, I was involved in groundbreaking legislative changes in campaign finance and ethics reform that I believe benefited the electoral government process, candidates, elected officials and the people we represent.” Other Democratic Senators present at the public forum included Senators Gustavo Rivera, Neil Breslin, Velmanette Montgomery, Toby Ann Stavisky, Malcolm Smith, Liz Krueger and Daniel Squadron, ranking member of the Senate Investigations & Government Operations Committee.

“As we continue our work here in Albany to come to a consensus on an ethics reform package, I will remain mindful of the will of the people that unethical actions in Albany are not warranted,” concluded Addabbo.