



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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Wally is a friend of mine. He's 90 years old and a World War II veteran. He's also a gentleman who long ago stopped worrying about what people think. Don't get me wrong. He's as sharp as a tack. It's just that he speaks his mind and doesn't sweat the outcome. You could be mayor, senator, or President of the United States, you work for him and he prides himself on "giving it to you straight." I guess that's a fringe benefit of a long life. It's also why I have always valued his opinion.

Now and then I pop over to see how Wally's getting along but also to get a fresh perspective on things. On a recent visit we got to talking about the 24-hour news cycle that seems to bring us nothing but angst. You watch these programs and come away feeling that it's a miracle our country functions at all. The airwaves are filled with the government's inability to enact change and get our country out of recession. While many are frantically looking for work, wondering how to pay for this winter's heating oil, our concerns are met with the bickering of political parties that block any opportunity for real progress. Whether it's the jobs bill in Washington or the protests of Occupy Wall Street, it's seems we are a nation divided.

As usual, Wally put it in a different light. He said if you get past the talking heads whose job it is to emphasize what divides us, we'd see the bigger picture. We'd find people all over the country, from different walks of life, all united by the same goals. Everyone wants to get people back to work, everyone wants affordable homes, everyone wants good education for their kids and everyone wants a doctor when they're sick. Of course I responded that how we get there is the problem; the devil is in the details.

That's when I had my "a-ha" moment. courtesy of Wally. He said while that was true it was actually our politicians who disagree so vehemently that they would rather throw out the baby with the bathwater. They are so concerned with gaining political advantage, blaming the other side, that they forget that everyday people are far more willing to compromise than their elected officials are. People are fed up with government's inertia. They just want to get things done.

Touché Wally. Whether it's a national issue in Washington or something as local as a new Nassau Coliseum here at home, we've seen political disagreement bring progress to a standstill at the expense of the taxpayer. The challenge for all of us is to put differences aside and concentrate on solutions that are as fair as possible to everyone, without being distracted by the especially squeaky wheels of one group or another. We know there are no perfect solutions, but that doesn't mean we should scrap every idea. Good government makes good politics, but unfortunately the inverse is not true.

In Albany, we were, in fact, able to compromise on a myriad of issues that resulted in what has been called the most productive session in New York's history. With your help and input, we'll keep that momentum and continue getting things done.