



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

What You Should Know

RUBEN DIAZ March 20, 2012

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While speaking with State Senator José Peralta from Queens, I learned about a problem in which most of the Hispanic legislature, especially the leaders of Somos, have gotten into with the labor unions in New York State.

As you know, Somos is an activity celebrated every year in Albany and coordinated by the Hispanic legislators in order to create a “Hispanic Agenda in favor of the Hispanic Community.”

This activity, through all the years, has changed names from “Somos El Futuro” which in English means “We Are the Future” – to “Somos Uno” which means “We Are One” – and now it is just plain “Somos” meaning “We Are.”

When I came to Albany in 2002, I joined the group and started to participate in this activity every year. I used to bring 17 buses filled with senior citizens to participate in what was called the "Senior Luncheon." But after noticing and becoming aware of how Somos has just become a tool of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and that every year they continued voting against the interests of our community in order to please Silver, I then decided not to participate, nor to be a member.

Last year, as you already know, they all voted for a budget that was detrimental to our minority community: cutting services from senior citizens; cutting education services from our children; cutting close to \$3 billion dollars from Medicaid, making it dangerous for members of our community to get sick and get decent healthcare; and forcing many not-for-profit organizations that serve our community to close their doors. All this because they were so afraid of Speaker Silver and the Governor.

This year, you should know, that one more time they went along with the Speaker and the Governor and voted to destroy pension funds for the working members of our community.

According to Senator Peralta, those votes against pension funds have made every union in the State and the leaders of the labor movement so upset that they have decided not to participate nor contribute funding to Somos.

To me, dear reader, it is very unclear what Somos really means. It could mean various things:

"Somos: one thing in our community and another thing in Albany;"

"Somos: the puppet of the Governor to help him balance the budget on the backs of the poor and needy;"

"Somos: Hispanic only during re-election times;"

“Somos: only in name.”

This weekend the great leaders of our community will congregate in New York to celebrate the achievement of Somos. I have to ask: What achievement and what Somos?

I am Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz and this is what you should know.