



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

What You Should Know

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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The Second Floor is Calling

You should know that the Office of the New York State Governor is located on the Second Floor of the Capital Building in Albany. Therefore, anything and everything that has to do with the Governor is referred to as coming “from the Second Floor.”

You should also know that there were seven pieces of legislation dealing with the Budget. Independently, each piece of legislation was supposed to be discussed and approved by the majority of the Senators before they could be sent to the Governor to sign into law.

It was on Friday, March 30, 2012 when the Senate started its Session at 10am to begin “The Battle of the Budget” in order for the greatest legislators to show the world how they “protect, defend and care for” their communities.

By 12 noon, we had only gone through and approved two (2) of the seven (7) pieces of the Budget legislation. Senator Liz Krueger was standing on the Floor of the Senate, discussing in depth the third piece of Budget legislation – and then it happened: there was a call from the Second Floor.

Suddenly, everything stopped, the Senate went into an immediate recess. Every Senator was instructed to eat pizza - courtesy of the Leadership – while the Senate Leadership went to the Second Floor to stand by the Governor in front of the cameras while Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law a Budget that was not yet approved by the Senate.

What a marvelous achievement by the powerful Governor - and what a demonstration of obedience by the Members of the New York State Legislature!

Can you imagine: this was history in the making to sign into Law a Budget that had not been approved by the legislature ... only in New York.

There are many questions that come to my mind: Is this legal? Was there any law broken? Is this democracy in action? Did the Governor call everyone beforehand and get them to promise their votes in order for him not to be embarrassed?

Can you imagine what would have happened if the Governor signed the Budget into Law in front of the cameras – and then the legislature did not approve it? He would have been the joke of the nation.

I believe something is going on here ... Some people believe that this was done as a favor to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver in order for him to have time to observe his religious beliefs. If that was in fact the reason to break the rules and sign the Budget without the approval of the Legislature, I must ask everyone who accuses ME of mixing my religion with my political duties what they have to say now.

By 1:30pm, the Senate was called back into Session, and Senator Liz Krueger, acting like nothing unusual had happened, resumed her lengthy questioning of the Budget.

What was the purpose, and what was the point? We should have all been sent home.

The Second Floor had its second victory: an on-time budget (the second year in a row), done during daylight, another Budget balanced on the backs of the poor, and the first one signed into law even before it was even passed in the Senate.

You should know that the Budget did not include the Dream Act; it took away senior citizens STAR tax relief help; it eliminated the Tenant Protection Unit leaving tenants all over New York State without protection; and it has no money for minority business enterprises – among other things.

I do not understand why Black and Hispanic legislators would vote in favor of and approve of something like that, even knowing that it was already signed into law a few hours earlier by the Governor. I cannot understand how they could stand on the Senate Floor and speak on the Senate Floor as if they were fighting for the immigrant students and the rest of the needy people in New York.

You should also know that the day before the Budget was signed into Law, the Governor asked all of the Senators to go to his mansion and partake with him drinking and eating his food. Would it be possible that it was during that gathering that they promised him they would vote in favor of the Budget? I don't know and I can't say for sure because I was not there.

The whole situation only reminds me of when Rome was controlled by Emperors, and the way in which the Emperor used to summon his subjects to his palace. Everyone had to stop what they were doing and run to him or suffer the consequences.

Oops! I have to go. My phone is ringing. The Second Floor is calling.

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