



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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What You Should Know

RUBEN DIAZ September 30, 2013

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Sheldon Silver has a driver ... so what's the big fuss?

You should know that the New York Post has spent a lot of time and resources on its writers and photographers to investigate New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's driver. On Sunday, September 29, Candice Giove's article "Silver's driver making wasteful Albany-NYC trips" accuses Speaker Silver of wasting New York taxpayer money that pays for his driver.

Why can't the Assembly Speaker have a driver? What's the big fuss?

You should know that Sheldon Silver is one of the most powerful politicians in New York State, and it only stands to reason that he may have some very powerful enemies out there. Does anyone really think that it is irresponsible for Speaker Silver to hire a retired NYPD officer to drive him to and from events in New York City and in Albany?

How is this a real ground for criticism?

Anyone with a car knows how hard it is to find parking in any busy city. Can you imagine if Speaker Silver was expected to attend a meeting or event and couldn't find a parking spot in the area – and had to drive around and around, causing him to be late or miss an event? Even we meager elected officials who don't have Speaker Silver's responsibilities and his heavy agenda – even we bring someone to drive us so we're not late for events and meetings.

I think that not only Sheldon Silver should have a driver, but Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeff Klein, and Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb should, too. In their capacities as leaders in the State Legislature, they all share very similar security and parking concerns as Speaker Silver, and they all should all have drivers and a security detail.

If Speaker Silver's driver/security detail were flying to Albany with him, then maybe the New York Post could consider that their "AHA!" moment and condemn the driver for racking up frequent-flier miles. But this coverage by the New York Post of the Speaker is near the top of the list of the most ridiculous and wasteful use of media resources I have ever seen.

The NY Post also reported that Speaker Silver's staffer denied that the Speaker has a driver, and I cannot understand how or why anyone would panic and not just say, "Yes, he does," when asked about this by the New York Post or anyone else.

My dear reader, I can understand the New York Post's criticism of Sheldon Silver in other matters, such as those involving William Rapfogel, the Aqueduct Racetrack racino bid, the misuse of the Speaker's address on Grand Street, the scandal involving disgraced Assemblyman Vito Lopez, etc. etc. But I cannot understand the New York Post's criticism of Speaker Silver for having a driver. Give me a break!

Ladies and gentlemen, it makes no sense for the New York Post or anyone else to criticize Speaker Sheldon Silver for hiring a driver who clearly serves as his security detail – and who, by the way, is making a lot less money than many, many people with less responsibility who work in our local and state government. Even New York City's Mayoral candidates have been designated security details! Again, I have to ask: What's the big fuss?

This is Senator Reverend Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know