



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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The New, New York Middle Ground

When did bipartisanship become a bad thing?

Well, one group of radicals here in New York is so upset that Republicans and Democrats were working together that they launched an all out war to stop it. They actually targeted people who were working together for progress. What's worse is that it worked, and that should scare the hell out of all Long Islanders.

Recently, the five Senators of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) who formed a successful, functional, bipartisan governing coalition with Senate Republicans, caved in to threats of primaries from this group and pledged to sever their bipartisan ties. So too did Governor Andrew Cuomo, who earned this faction's ire by having the nerve to work across the aisle. In doing so, they all turned their backs on an astonishing record of shared accomplishments that were widely recognized for having righted New York's listing fiscal ship.

The willingness to cross party lines and come to the middle with us led to such admirable results. Together, we instituted an historic property tax cap; passed four consecutive, on-time balanced budgets which controlled spending and closed billions of dollars in budget gaps without raising a single tax or fee; delivered desperately needed tax relief to residents and businesses, including repeal of the onerous MTA payroll tax on Long Island small businesses; and made smart investments in priorities like infrastructure and education. Taxes of all kinds were cut, from state income taxes to manufacturing taxes, giving New Yorkers of every background a better shot at recovery from the economic downturn. The end result of this celebrated cooperation is a more resilient New York, open for business and creating jobs, with even Moody's and Fitch bestowing their highest credit ratings since 1972.

And it wasn't all one-sided. Despite well-documented, heated debates that went long into the night, Democrats brought to the floor and passed legislation important to the left's beliefs: increasing minimum wage, the safe, regulated use of medical marijuana, and other progressive initiatives. None of these fiscal or social policy breakthroughs came easily; negotiations had to be hammered out every step of the way and neither side got entirely what they wanted. But we Republicans knew we had willing partners whose goal was progress, not absolute victory. That was key to New York's turnaround. Besides, I always believed that democracy was noisy, but that it works.

Now, in the blink of an eye, that's all changed. Both Governor Cuomo and the IDC kowtowed to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, his powerful unions and the political thugs at the Working Families Party (WFP) in order to avoid potentially bruising primaries. They were basically given a choice: end the bipartisanship and embrace the Mayor's so-called "progressive" agenda or walk the plank and become a target of special interest operatives and money.

The WFP and the more radical wing of the Democratic Conference are successfully exercising the same bullying tactics for which they daily criticize right wing conservatives in other states. We are witnessing the surrender of mainstream democrats in New York, our partners of four years, to the farthest fringes of the far left. That's a recipe for the same type of dysfunction which prevents anything from getting done in Washington. It's the last thing we need here.

None of this bodes well for our suburban communities. Encouraged by these weaknesses, the WFP is now deploying its New York City operatives to Long Island

and other suburban and rural communities to force their radical agenda down our throats: late-term, doctor-less abortions, free college tuition for illegal immigrants, taxpayer funded political campaigns, and a host of new taxes and fees. Regardless of their threats, we continue to embrace our identity: moderates who recognize that New York is more than just New York City and who are committed to making sure every voice is heard.