



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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What About the Three Men in a Room?

RUBEN DIAZ February 4, 2015

What You Should Know

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WHAT ABOUT THE THREE MEN IN A ROOM?

You should know that we human beings have mastered the ability to create our own psychological defense mechanisms to point out other people's problems in order to cover up our own. This is the case of our beloved Governor Andrew Cuomo, who just released a 5-point reform plan for New York State's Legislators.

Some call it tough talk and others call it bragging, when the Governor says either we take his plan or we get no Budget - but if you look carefully, my dear reader, the Governor's reform plan only involves other people's power and benefits. He has completely excluded himself from this deal, distancing himself from being scrutinized.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's 5-Point Plan includes:

1. Total disclosure of lawmaker outside income.

This means every other area of income, including the family's income from other sources. I am not sure if this only applies to the lawmakers of the New York State Legislature, or if it also includes the Governor and his family members, his girlfriend, and the State Attorney General, the State Comptroller, and their spouses and significant others and family members.

2. A constitutional amendment requiring convicted public officials to forfeit their pensions

This reform sounds like a big deal, but in reality, it will only deal with the future, and won't fix much or make a big difference at all.

3. Reforming the legislative travel expense system

This measure only focuses on the travel expenses for legislators. It does not include the travel expenses for Governor Andrew Cuomo's use of helicopters, planes, motorcades, motorcycles, and the security details that join him. Nor does it include his national and international travel costs and all of those expenses.

4. Campaign funds be spent only for campaign purposes

This means that it would not be proper for the Governor to use \$100+ thousand dollars from his \$35 million dollars in campaign funds to pay for the prominent white collar criminal defense lawyer he hired when federal investigators widened their investigation about possible obstruction of justice or witness tampering with Governor Andrew Cuomo's Moreland Commission.

5. Campaign finance reform

This measure should include a piece of legislation that I introduced in the State Senate in 2010 to increase transparency. Banning outside income isn't enough; who is giving you

money is the other part - as in Quid pro Quo. My Senate bill requires cash and in-kind contributions valued over \$250 to be placed on an elected official's web site within thirty days of receipt of the contribution. The specific dollar amount, type of contribution, and the identity of the donor, will also be required.

The biggest measure that is needed to end corruption in Albany - which was not included in Governor Andrew Cuomo's 5 Points of Reform - is to put an end to Three-Men-in-a-Room. It is nice, great, and even magnificent for Governor Andrew Cuomo to fill his lungs and boldly announce his call for reform. But, how come our dear Governor (while bragging about reform) does not even touch the issue of Three-Men-in-a-Room?

U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara blasted the concentration of power that goes along with New York's Three-Men-in-a-Room" by saying: "Power in New York State, as far as anyone can tell, is concentrated in the hands of just a few men—some would say, just three men."

He also added: "Why three men? Can there be a woman? Do they always have to be white? How small is the room that they can only fit three men? Is it three men in a closet? Are there cigars? Can they have Cuban cigars now? After a while, doesn't it get a little gamy in that room?"

My dear reader, Governor Andrew Cuomo took member items away from the legislators - and took them for himself and his office. Now he talks about reforming others - but not himself.

If Governor Andrew Cuomo really wants to talk about reform, then he needs to do away with the Three-Men-in-a-Room style of government that rules New York State.

Ladies and gentlemen, Governor Andrew Cuomo publicly stated that he will not sign the Budget unless his 5 points are approved. We legislators should tell Governor Cuomo that we will not vote for his budget unless he includes reform for the Three-Men-in-a-Room.

This is State Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.