



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

## I'll Second That (E)motion

MALCOLM A. SMITH April 21, 2009

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For decades, the way the Senate operates has stifled good legislation from getting off the ground. Under the new Senate Majority, we are empowering every single member of our chamber—Democrat and Republican—to do the work of the people of New York.

Some of these occurrences are not flashy or newsworthy—but their obscurity does not change their significance. Take today, for example. Today, the Senate made history, putting partisan rancor aside and rising as a collective body to move two bills towards passage in an especially unique and democratic way.

The term “**Motion to Petition**” may sound arcane and parliamentary. But what it means is that a Senator can move to have his or her bill considered on the floor without moving it out of a Committee.

Why is this important? Because in our current committee structure, good bills can sometimes get held up in Committees and never make it to the Senate floor for a vote. And though the process for a “motion to petition” has existed for many years, it has never

garnered the bipartisan support to be used successfully.

But today, thirty-six Senators, both Democrat and Republican, voted to move two bills directly to the floor, thus bypassing the traditional Committee structure.

Both S.1989—by Utica legislator Joe Griffo, which strengthens our laws regarding the crime of sexual abuse of a person under the age of thirteen—and S. 1510 by Syracuse representative John DeFrancisco which will increase protections for our society's most vulnerable children—will now move directly to the floor for full consideration.

The Senate will continue to take important steps towards reform. By empowering all sixty-two Senators to work for the common good of all New Yorkers, we will reinvigorate democracy in the chamber and restore representative government to the people.