



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas P. Morahan

THE NEED FOR RULES REFORMS TO END ALBANY DYSFUNCTION

THOMAS P. MORAHAN June 17, 2009

With a very short time left in the 2009 regular legislative session, I have joined a bipartisan group of Senators to call for the enactment of real rules reforms that would truly end the dysfunction that has caused the public to lose confidence in the state Legislature by increasing government openness, accountability and fairness.

Albany is more dysfunctional than ever and nothing is getting done. The budget was negotiated in complete secrecy, shutting out the public and telling them they didn't deserve to know what was being discussed. The result was record increases in taxes and spending. The MTA bailout was negotiated in secret and the result was even more taxes on businesses and property taxpayers. The process of government will keep getting worse unless we adopt the reforms we are pushing.

Rules reform must be more than a slogan. Every representative needs the ability to be able to introduce a bill, see it through for a vote, and participate in the budget process so the needs of their district are met. These reforms accomplish those goals and should be enacted."

The proposed Reforms include:

- > A six year term limit for the Majority Leader
- > Eight year term limits for all committee chairs and ranking members;
- > Messages of necessity only used in emergency situations;
- > Create a bipartisan Legislative Budget Office to provide fiscal analysis of legislation;
- > Requiring Senators to attend committee meetings, publishing committee agendas and voting records on the Internet; webcasting committee meetings and creating a NY_SPAN television network to add context to legislative proceedings;
- > Committee membership should be proportional by party;
- > All members should have equal access to resources and all members shall receive the same allocation for staff; and
- > Limit bill introduction

This year's budget adoption process was a disgrace to open government. It was a dead-end process for too many, upstate and lower Hudson Valley New York taxpayers, workers, employers, families, and communities. So there's plenty of work left to do to open up the legislative process to greater public scrutiny, accountability and effectiveness, but the sand's just about run out of the hourglass this session.

An open, transparent Legislative system is an essential foundation for all of the reforms that are necessary to lower taxes and revive New York's economy. I have supported reform from my first day in Albany. This package of much-needed reforms will end abuses of power that paralyze government and allow the voice of the people to truly be heard.

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