



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## Getting On With The People's Business

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY

July 1, 2009

**Dear 18th Senate District Voter:**

The current crisis over the operation of the New York State Senate has been characterized as an embarrassment, a calamity, a circus, a joke, and worse. Citizens statewide have expressed their outrage over the current stalemate that has turned the legislative process upside down and made a mockery of New York State government.

I, too, am disheartened over the breakdown in the process and I am working tirelessly to seek a resolution to the current stalemate and get back to the important work of the people – YOU!

On **Monday, June 8** – as the Senate began an historic end-of-session push to bring true reform on a spectrum of fundamental policy issues – the Minority Party Conference attempted a procedural maneuver to regain power and thereby reverse the will of New Yorkers who voted for change last November. I believe this was a self-serving power-grab that has, as you know, thrown the Senate into complete deadlock.

On **Tuesday, June 30**, however, the three-week long stalemate, which stalled all legislation in the Senate, came to an end as my Senate Majority colleagues and I obtained the 32 votes

necessary to achieve a quorum. *(One Minority Party Senator, Frank Padavan, entered the chamber, giving us a quorum. The Senate Rules and case law are very specific on what constitutes a quorum and when a Senator is marked as present. The mere presence of a senator in the senate chamber, even just by entering or walking through the room, will result in the journal clerk recognizing the elected as being in attendance.)* **After obtaining a quorum through the presence of 32 members in the Chamber, the Senate unanimously passed more than 100 major and non-controversial legislation.** If these bills were not passed, New York faced the potential loss of billions in revenue and hundreds of thousands of jobs. Here is a summary of what we accomplished on June 30.

#### **Power for Jobs:**

This **\$136 million** program provides **low-cost power to businesses and non-profits across X`the state.** By passing this bill, **New York State protected over 250,000 jobs.**

#### **Education and Federal Stimulus Funding:**

A series of bills which will secure a total of **\$3.8 billion in federal education and health funds for New York schoolchildren,** help fund local school budgets and reduce the need for local property tax increases.

#### **Housing Development:**

The Senate passed bills that will provide **\$1.5 billion for affordable housing, mortgage assistance, and middle class and low income housing projects** throughout the state. These programs will address the State's long-standing commitment to housing, including in rural, suburban and urban communities.

#### **Empowering Local Governments to Raise Revenue for Services:**

The Senate passed **bills that will allow local governments to raise \$1.7 billion in revenue** used to support local services including schools, local government programs and operations and law enforcement.

**We fulfilled our obligation and passed the bills necessary to keep local governments operating – but Governor Paterson is now refusing to sign the bills into law.**

There remains a 31-31 tie between the Majority Conference and the Minority Conference, and we know that there is no way to resolve this impasse without cooperation and compromise. To get the business of our state back on track, our Majority Conference has offered the Minority Conference an authentic bipartisan operating agreement. They have refused to accept any of our proposals and, to make matters even worse, the Governor is supporting their in action.

Clearly, we need to work out an agreement to conduct business in an evenly split chamber. Other states have done so. And we can adopt new rules to provide for the ability for rank and file members to move bills to the floor for debate and vote, establish equitable distribution of staff and member resources.

I will continue to negotiate a bi-partisan operating agreement that allows the Senate to resume the people's business without sacrificing the issues that matter most to you and all of my constituents. With your help, I am hopeful that we will once again have a united Senate body. Please reach out to the Governor, as well as to your elected officials in the City Council and the Assembly and urge them to stand with us during this tumultuous time.

Thank you for your continuing support and your confidence in my leadership.