



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Very Enlightening Editorial on Reform

CATHARINE YOUNG July 20, 2009



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Democrats Must Govern With Grace

POSTED: July 19, 2009 We hope we can take it as good news that the state Senate has, after a lot of kicking and screaming, agreed to be more fair to the people of New York, more democratic in the way it operates and more open so that we can all see the promises of

reform fulfilled.

It was not easy getting to this point, as you certainly know if you have been paying even just a modicum of attention.

A very short review:

The old guard Republican leadership, which is gone now, had treated the Senate like a fiefdom for 40 years - shutting Democrats out of even being able to bring legislation to the floor for a vote.

The new guard Democrats continued those old ways when they took the majority role last January, fully ignoring the prime promise of their campaign - to reform that rotten system.

But with just a slim 32 to 30 majority and some restive members, the Democrats' leaders should have been looking over their shoulders.

Actually, they apparently were to some degree aware of what was happening this spring since just before they lost the majority when two of their members decided to throw in with the GOP, they pushed through pay raises of up to 50 percent for some of their staff members.

So much for governing in the best interests of the people.

But we digress.

As you know, in early June two Democrats joined with the Republicans to form a 32-member coalition that claimed to hold the majority in the state Senate.

The Democrats responded to this by turning off the lights in the Senate chamber and hiding the keys.

Undaunted, the coalition went ahead and passed the reforms for which the public had been clamoring. The Democrats refused to agree the coalition had legal claim to anything.

Then one of the coalition Democrats gave up and went back to where he had started. And after a time, the other Democrat, under the promise that his old mates would restore him to a financially lucrative committee chairmanship, did the same.

Thus, the new guard Democrats were once again in charge.

That is where we are today.

Last week, in what surely required plenty of folks to swallow some mighty huge egos, the Democrats and Republicans together passed the reforms that will, at last, bring democracy and good government back to the Senate.

By the way, you will find a synopsis of the reforms accompanying this editorial at www.post-journal.com under the In Our Opinion section.

Since he is leader of the Republicans who, as he put it, set out to reform the legislative process in the first place, we will share Sen. Dean Skelos' take on the legislation approved by Democrats and Republicans alike.

"Last week, people were asking if the events of the past five weeks were worth the trouble. When people look at these reforms, they will see the answer is yes. Because for the first time we have diluted the power of leaders to decide the fate of bills or control the resources available to each and every member," he said.

We shall see whether the majority Democrats, having been forced by the Republicans to live up to their own campaign promises, do so with grace.