



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

Green Doesn't Mean Good

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO September 27, 2009

| ISSUE: **GOING GREEN**

To the Editor:

In your September 18, 2009 issue of the Central New York Business Journal you published an article announcing that the legislature passed the Green Jobs/Green New York program. The bill redirects \$112 million of NYSERDA funds to a revolving loan fund to provide resources to residents to weatherize their homes, provide energy audits and the like.

The bill helps to make New York green and helps to create green jobs, so it must be good. Not so fast. I voted against the bill. Let me tell you why.

The bill, headed to Governor Paterson for his approval or veto, creates a system for distributing funds that is nothing more than a way to divert funds to “constituency-based organizations.” These organizations are defined as “organizations incorporated for the purpose of providing services or other assistance to economically or socially disadvantaged persons within a specific community, and which are supported by, or whose actions are directed by members of the community in which they operate.

Under the bill these organizations would apply for grants to administer the weatherizing and other benefits of the program. The cost for the bureaucracy to administer the program

has been estimated at \$52 million!

During the debate on the Senate floor, I argued that the state and federal governments already have weatherizing programs, and why wasn't the money distributed through existing governmental entities and programs? The answer was that they are inefficient, and it was therefore necessary to distribute the funding through "constituency-based organizations."

Senators were reminded by the sponsors, which included Senators Darrel Aubertine and David Valesky, that there were tens of thousands of residents in each Senate district that would benefit from the program. When I asked how they knew that Senator Eric Schneiderman said that they had somehow gotten the information. I then asked, if you have identified those eligible then why don't you simply send them a letter and let them contract directly with contractors, rather than allowing tens of millions of dollars to be siphoned off in the administration of the program. The answer was that the direct notification wouldn't work.

It is simply wrong to divert so much money from the purposes for which the program was intended, namely to weatherize homes and get contractors working – contractors that pay taxes, unlike "constituency-based" non-profit organizations.

To call something green doesn't mean that it is good. In this case, there is a much better way to accomplish the desirable result of making buildings energy efficient and providing jobs in these tough economic times. We should use existing programs so as not to create a greater bureaucracy and thereby have more dollars available to get the job done. This is why I voted "no".

Very truly yours,

John A. DeFrancisco

New York State Senator