



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rachel May

Reforming the Legislative Process in Albany

RACHEL MAY August 19, 2019

| ISSUE: **LEGISLATIVE REFORM, ALBANY REFORM**



Democrats gained a large majority in the NY State Senate in 2019, something that had not happened in many decades. The new leadership came in with very high expectations, but also with a very complex task at hand. The 40 members of the Democratic Majority Conference are very diverse, not only in terms of race, gender, religion, and age, but in our geographic distribution around the state and the wide range of legislative priorities we each bring to the table.

One goal we could all agree on was making the state government more accountable and seeking out and listening to the voices of all New Yorkers. Here are some of the ways we followed through on that:

LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS

--We held more than FIVE TIMES as many hearings this year than in the previous year (not counting the obligatory budget hearings).

-- In 2018, ALL the hearings were held in Albany. This year, we took them to the people and held nearly half of the hearings all across the state.

-- I'm especially proud that we held FOUR in or near our district: on climate change, farm worker rights, public transportation, and affordable housing. By opening up the conversation, we are ensuring that people from all across New York can participate in our democracy and bring their voices to the table.

<https://www.nystateofpolitics.com/2019/07/senate-dems-tout-public-hearing-schedule/>

NO MORE ANONYMOUS BILLS

--In previous years, some controversial or merely petty bills were introduced by the Rules Committee without a legislator as sponsor. The current Majority leadership shelved that tactic in 2019. "People have a right to know who is responsible for the laws we enact," said Deputy Majority Leader Mike Gianaris.

<https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2019/08/19/rules-a-prolific-legislator-quietly-disappears-1144686>

WORK GROUPS

--Some things we all agreed on from the beginning -- like improving our outdated and arbitrary election laws and protecting LGBTQ individuals from discrimination -- but on other issues it was far more difficult to reach agreement. To help build consensus, leadership invited Senators with differing perspectives to sit down together and develop the best

possible bills that we could all agree on.

--As a result, some of our big legislative victories – criminal justice reform, tenants' rights, climate policy – were the product of thoughtful discussion and of weighing the interests of a wide variety of interest groups and communities.

--I was proud to represent the concerns of Central New York in four of these working groups: on housing policy, climate policy, minority and women-owned businesses, and farm worker rights.

<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/personality/personality/new-room-new-rules-heastie-stewart-cousins.html>