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January 31, 2011

The Honorable Dean Skelos  
Majority Leader  
New York State Senate  
909 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Skelos: *Dean*

I am writing to share my concerns regarding your efforts to undermine the role assigned to the Lieutenant Governor by New York's Constitution. Your action will subvert the democratic process by disenfranchising the voters who elected the current Governor and Lieutenant Governor, and by violating the open and democratic process required for constitutional change.

New York is the first state where the presiding officer of the upper legislative house – a member of the Executive Branch – was also granted the authority to submit a casting vote, to break deadlocks. Emphasizing the wisdom of New York's construct, the Founding Fathers referred to our State's constitution in defending the need for the Vice President to preside over the U.S. Senate.

It is my belief that your Conference's proposed rules violate our state constitution. Your Conference shared that belief in 2008, when Temporary President Joe Bruno argued that because of the absence of a Lieutenant Governor, making him the presiding office of the Senate, he would be able to vote twice on deadlocked votes, including Senate leadership votes.

If passed, these rules would disenfranchise the voters of New York. It is their prerogative to change the Constitution, because amendments must be submitted to the people. As you well know, the Constitution provides a transparent and democratic process, rather than the murky and unaccountable one you used. Therefore, I urge you to listen to the voters, who for more than 200 years have elected Governors knowing that the power of the casting vote was assigned by New York's Constitution to the Executive Branch.

Yours in Partnership,

*Kevin Parker*  
Kevin S. Parker