

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



TONY AVELLA
SENATOR, 11TH DISTRICT

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June 28, 2012

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
Executive Chamber
Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

FAX & MAIL

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Allow me the opportunity to comment on your recent proposal to increase legislator's salaries.

In my opinion, it represents a conflict of interest for any legislator to vote on their own pay raise. In the past, legislation increasing the salaries for Assembly Members and Senators was passed in one legislative session and would take effect in the next session, in other words the next elected class of officials.

Although this practice does not seem to be spelled out in law, it should be continued, with one caveat. Any such proposal should be announced prior to the November general elections so that voters will have an opportunity to view Assembly and Senate candidates in light of a higher salary.

Your proposal also suggests including a requirement that a pay raise should be conditional on eliminating the "per diem" for legislators that currently exists.

I do not believe that abolishing the "per diem", in return for a pay raise serves any useful good "government" purpose. The "per diems" serve to compensate legislators for their hotel bills and meals while in Albany and other expenses such as gas and highway and bridge tolls to go to and from the district. In addition, since some members travel much greater distances than others, eliminating the "per diem" would unfairly financially affect those members.

A better approach would be to stop the anti-good government "lulus" (bonuses) which have been used historically by the leadership of both houses to control individual member votes. This is a practice which should be outlawed and making this happen in exchange for a pay raise would help to greatly improve Albany.

Quite frankly, these positions should also be made "full time" in exchange for any pay raise.

I hope that you will consider my suggestions when submitting your proposal to the legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Avella".

Tony Avella
Senator
11th Senatorial District