



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Minority Vows To Continue The Fight To Reform State Government

MALCOLM A. SMITH April 22, 2007

Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith said Reform Day 2007 "gives us an opportunity to reflect on the success we've had in changing the way business is conducted in the State Capitol."

Smith said, "We've done more in the last four months to improve New York's government than had been done in the previous decade. And in the coming weeks we will see additional significant reforms."

Smith said the Senate Democrats have "long been the most vocal and consistent proponents of government reform," and noted that the "people of New York State have responded very positively to our reform agenda.

"Whether in Syracuse or Yonkers, Madison County or Nassau, the residents of our State have made it very clear that they want change."

Smith said voters turned their backs on the status quo and elected "our warriors for reform -- Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Craig Johnson and David Valesky," all of whom espoused a strong reform message and have actively sought to change and improve State government.

Smith also said "the new energy, strength and commitment Governor Spitzer has brought to the reform movement has helped us to enact significant changes to our budget process, ethics and lobbying regulations and education funding formula."

But, Smith said, the job is not yet complete, and he vowed to partner with the Governor to make our government more effective and less expensive for the people of New York State.

Smith said he also hopes to work with Majority Leader Joe Bruno to enact important reforms in the Senate chamber.

Smith praised the Majority Leader for saying he supports term limits for Legislative Leaders. This would help address one of the most serious problems facing the legislative process – the almost absolute control the Majority Leader holds over the legislative process in the Senate, which rendered the New York legislature the most dysfunctional in the entire nation, according to good government groups.

But, Smith noted, "if he's truly serious, we can implement term limits for the majority and minority leaders immediately, simply by changing the rules in the Senate."

Smith also said he was pleased to see a Republican Senator introduce legislation that would distribute Senate resources, including staffing and member items, in a more equitable fashion.

Senate Minority has tried to enact rules changes for the Senate that would have required equal distribution of resources, as well as other important reforms. One proposed rules change would require that all votes in the chamber are recorded, so lawmakers could be held accountable. Under the current rules, Senators do not have to record their votes on hostile

amendments or motions to move bills out of committee.

Unfortunately, the Republican Majority voted down the proposed rules changes.

"It is time to stop talking about reform and start taking action in the Senate," Smith said. "As they stand now, the Republican proposals are nothing more than window dressing."
