



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Democratic Leader Smith Offers To Take Helm Of Senate Leadership As Republicans Remain Mired In Party Politics

MALCOLM A. SMITH September 24, 2007

State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) and members of the Senate Democratic Conference today called on Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno to end the partisan Senate Investigations Committee hearings and get back to business addressing Upstate economic development, paid family leave, Wick's Law reform and a raft of other legislative priorities.

"Today I call upon Senator Bruno to put this partisan charade to rest," said Smith of today's GOP-led Senate Investigations Committee hearing, the third to examine issues surrounding the alleged misuse of state resources by public officials.

On Friday, Albany County District Attorney David Soares issued a report echoing the Attorney General's conclusion that no illegal conduct occurred in the Executive Chamber when members of the Governor's staff released information on Bruno's use of state aircraft. With the conclusion of these inquiries, as well as a third being conducted by the newly-formed State Commission on Public Integrity, Smith said it is "time to move on."

"While the Senate Republican Conference chooses to occupy its time with a needless display of political theater, I offer my services as Democratic Leader to assume leadership of the

Senate and work with the Governor and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver to get back to the business of legislating, leaving Bruno and the Republican Conference free to do as they please," said Smith.

Smith's comments were made during a press conference preceding today's Investigations Committee hearings in Albany. Smith was joined by Senator Neil Breslin (D-Albany).

Breslin said: "We can no longer tolerate a pointless exercise that squanders valuable public resources, not the least of which is time that should be spent in the Senate chamber performing the work we were elected to do."

Only after Senate Democrats gave notice of their press conference did the Majority Leader's office announce that Bruno would reconvene session in late October.

Smith also called "a gross misuse of public funds" the Republican Conference's decision to hire a high-profile political operative as the Investigations Committee's "special counsel" under a reported six-month, \$500,000 contract.

"If the Senate Republicans are so concerned about the misuse of state resources, then why have they struck an outrageously expensive deal with Joseph diGenova to help them advance their partisan farce," Smith said.

"Instead of lining a partisan political operative's pockets, what other purposes could Senate Republicans find for this sum of money if they were truly interested in the public's agenda, rather than their own?" he added.

Smith listed several more pressing uses for one-half million dollars -- an amount that could

cover the cost of 3,700 new school desks, \$5,000 in grants to 100 organizations for the purpose of domestic violence prevention or to purchase four new snowplows (at \$110,000 to \$120,000 apiece), among innumerable other uses.

Senate Republicans have allegedly signed a six-month contract worth \$500,000 in public funds with attorney Joseph diGenova to serve as legal counsel during the Senate Investigations Committee hearings. Instead, \$500,000 could be dedicated to the following:

Education

625 Notebook computers

3,700 new school desks

An additional 270,000 free lunches for children

13 new teachers in some school districts

Health Care

Providing \$5,000 each to 100 community organizations throughout the state for programs to prevent domestic violence

Transportation

Resurfacing seven miles of pavement

Purchasing four new snowplows (at \$110,000 to \$120,000 apiece)