



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Enthusiasm And Hope At Economic Development Town Hall Meeting Hosted By Senator Malcolm A. Smith And Esdc Chairman Pat Foye

MALCOLM A. SMITH November 18, 2007

Empire State Development Corporation Chairman Pat Foye and ESDC executives came to Queens on Thursday to answer the questions from small-business owners and community activists during the first Economic Development Town Hall Meeting at York College.

The meeting was hosted by Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm Smith (D-St. Albans) who announced a series of similar events following Governor Spitzer's decision to bring state government out of the office towers and into localities and neighborhoods.

“We are telling the people of the State of New York that we are open for business and that we are no longer a government that works just for insiders. This is a Government that wants to hear the concerns of small-business owners and help them reach their goals,” said Senator Smith. “We cannot guarantee equal outcomes, but we need to guarantee equal opportunities for everybody.”

Among other issues, the Town Hall focused on how small and developing businesses can become eligible for state contracts and benefit from the NYS Minority-and-Women-Owned Business Development Programs.

“When we and Governor Spitzer talk about Economic Development, it is basically a fancy word for jobs and investment. It is about bringing in private capital and investment, creating opportunities for all. That is really what economic development is about,” said Foye.

“It is very valuable for us to have the opportunity to explain our programs in a local setting and to hear the specific concerns of small-business people,” continued the ESDC Chairman.

Foye said that the Spitzer administration recognizes the high costs of doing business in New York State and referred to the administration's decision to amend the workers compensation statute to reduce the cost to all employers by \$1 billion dollars while increasing the benefits for injured workers.

In addition to Chairman Foye and Senator Smith, the forum include presentations from Michael Jones-Bey, ESDC Director of the Division of Minority-and-Women-Owned Business Development; Joseph Tazewell, New York City ESDC Regional Office Director; Aviva Steinberger, Director of Industry Development for the Strategic Business Division, and Spencer Ferdinand, Executive Director for the Queens County Overall Economic Development Corporation.

All panelists answered questions from the public, ranging from how to improve the chances of getting access to state government contracts for small and minority enterprises to how to start up a business and get financing.

Senator Smith and the ESDC have been working closely on a number of Economic Development initiatives, including efforts to promote business and trade between China and New York State.

In addition to Senator Smith, the Economic Development Forum was co-sponsored by Congressman Gregory Meeks, State Senator Shirley Huntley, Assembly Members William Scarborough, Vivian Cook, Barbara Clark, Audrey I. Pfeffer, Michele Titus; Council Members Leroy Comrie and Thomas White, Jr.

Senator Smith announced that in the coming days other agencies, including the State Departments of Transportation, Housing and Environmental Conservation will come to Queens to talk to the people about issues in those areas and bring solution to the problems at hand.