



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Senator Nozzolio Demands an End to Secret Budget Negotiations

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO March 29, 2009

Albany- With just nine days to go until the April 1st budget deadline, State Senator Mike Nozzolio is demanding that Governor Paterson and his Democrat majority members open the negotiations and allow the public to have a say in the budget, which will have a tremendous and dramatic impact on this State - particularly Upstate New York.

The New York State budget is now being negotiated by the Democrat majorities in the Assembly and Senate with no public debate or scrutiny. It reportedly contains billions of dollars in proposed tax hikes, including massive levies on health insurance policies and health services, as well as a secret proposal to raise the State sales tax to 4.5 percent.

“Governor Paterson, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith are circumventing the law and leaving millions of New Yorkers, especially Upstaters, without a voice during this year’s budget negotiations,” said Senator Nozzolio. “Instead, the State’s \$120 billion budget will be decided secretly behind closed doors by three Democrats, all from New York City. At a time when government transparency, balance and bipartisanship are essential, this attitude is unconscionable.”

Newspaper editorial boards from across New York State are also calling upon Governor David Paterson and Majority Leader Malcolm Smith to follow the law and open the budget process for public scrutiny.

Just two years ago, Senator Nozzolio helped enact into law sweeping budget reforms. These reforms created a schedule to achieve an on time, prior to April 1st budget that was to be debated in public - with input from both parties. The law also requires that joint budget conference committee meetings be scheduled within ten days of submission of the Executive Budget. It also requires the Senate and Assembly to enact their own budgets - in bill or resolution form - and then to have the differences in those budgets debated in public. These budget reforms were supported by every major advocate of government reform.

The Governor and his fellow New York City Democrat leaders are also circumventing the law by using special "messages of necessity" to enact the budget without allowing any period for public review.

"The Governor and Democrat leaders in both the Senate and Assembly are making a mockery of the legislative budget process by refusing to release their 2009-10 budget proposal to the public," continued Senator Nozzolio. "At the same time, these Democrat Senators and Assemblymen are discussing behind closed doors an additional \$5 billion in tax and fee hikes that will cripple job development and our economic recovery in New York State."

The latest tax increase is a proposal to raise the State sales tax from 4 percent to 4.5 percent. This would mean that parts of New York State could pay as much as 10 percent in total sales taxes when combined with their local sales taxes.

“New Yorkers need to be assured that their taxes will not be raised and that we in government are making every effort to create and retain jobs, not forcing people out of our State. I, along with my Republican colleagues, have publicly proposed a budget savings plan that reduces taxes, spends less and will create jobs. So far, Senate Republicans issued the only proposal that presents a comprehensive budget plan as an alternative to the Governor’s disastrous proposal,” said Senator Nozzolio.

“Senator Smith and his fellow Democrats must immediately make their budget proposals public - as required by law. If they do so, Senate Republicans will join them in calling on the Assembly to do the same so we can begin the public committee process to get a budget done openly, publicly and on time,” Senator Nozzolio concluded.