



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Larkin Speaks Out Against Governor's Food Stamps Proposal

WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR. June 6, 2007

Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) and his Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle today spoke out against Governor Eliot Spitzer's plan to eliminate the fingerprint verification and face-to-face interview process that food stamp applicants undergo to qualify for the program.

"This plan is an invitation for fraud," said Senator Larkin. "When we didn't have checks and balances in the past, we had fraud. This is exactly how so many abuses of the system took place. For the past 12 years, we've made great improvements to this billion-dollar government program to make sure we are qualifying the people who truly need this help. The Governor's plan would totally undo this progress. The abuses of the system are well documented. Corrupt individuals were able to take advantage of the program because we weren't making them accountable enough. Are we going to blindly trust that those who have stolen from, duped, schemed to defraud, and abused the social service system won't do it again--especially if we are not watching closely? This is extremely naive thinking and frankly, I'm quite surprised that the Governor, as a former Attorney General, who investigated so many crimes in the social service system, would propose such a short-sighted plan."

"Eliminating finger imaging would be a recipe for disaster that upsets the delicate balance between helping those who truly need help and opens up the floodgates to those unscrupulous individuals who want to take advantage of the system," said Senator Carl Kruger (D-Brooklyn), Chair of the Senate's Committee on Social Services, Children and Families. The Governor's recently announced proposal to scrap the state's fingerprint-imaging identification program "would wreak unintended havoc on a careful system of safeguards," Senator Kruger added.

In the mid-1990s, the Senate fought to enact anti-fraud measures in the state's social services system that resulted in a dramatic reduction in welfare rolls, greater accountability and a reduction in welfare fraud. The Senate also successfully fought last year to enact historic reforms to fight fraud in the Medicaid system to help save state and local tax dollars.

Senator Kruger noted that that former New York City Mayor John Lindsay's mission to increase the welfare rolls led to rampant fraud, "which in essence took the food out of deserving people's mouths and instead gave it to people who could pay for it without government intervention," he said.