



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Statement by State Senator Liz Krueger Following Governor's Veto of Women's Living Wage Bill

LIZ KRUEGER July 31, 2007

"I am very disappointed that Governor Spitzer has chosen to veto S3201/A3366, Senator Velmanette Montgomery's sustainable wage and non-traditional employment legislation. It is unfortunate that the Governor failed to see the value in giving social service agencies the option of placing women in higher wage, non-traditional employment opportunities. This legislation garnered overwhelming support in both chambers because of the recognition that these types of jobs move women and their children out of poverty, and off of government benefits for good.

This plan was modeled after a successful program in Kentucky that has proven significantly more successful in moving people out of poverty than current New York programs.

There have been profound misunderstandings and misrepresentations about the intent of this legislation, and what it would have actually done. Most significantly, this was not an unfunded mandate for social service agencies. These agencies are already obligated to help recipients develop skills that move them into employment and economic self-sufficiency. This legislation would give them another option, directing participants into higher wage careers.

Misinformation about the merits of this legislation is troubling, particularly regarding the impact it would have on women and their children. For instance, welfare policies of the last decade have not led to lower rates of child poverty, as some have argued. The number of children in poverty in our state, and in our country, has increased dramatically in the last 6 years according to a December 2006 report by the National Center for Children and Poverty. According to them, "[t]here are 1.3 million more children living in poverty today than in 2000..." In fact, New York is one of 13 states with the highest child poverty rates in the country. Also, while our welfare case load has gone down, income levels for women leaving welfare have not significantly increased. Poverty in New York City: 2005, a report by the Community Service Society shows that real earnings for low-income New York City families dropped 14% from 1999 through 2004.

Put simply: we have moved these women off welfare, but not out of poverty. Moving families off of public assistance, but not increasing their incomes, or moving children out of poverty, is not a victory. And it is definitely not a responsible model for the long-term economic success of our state.

This legislation was an innovative attempt to move women into jobs with sustainable wages for them and their children. I look forward to working with Senator Montgomery and others in both chambers as we continue to push this legislation and advocate more responsible means of moving people out of poverty and into socio-economic opportunities that allow them to contribute to our state's economy. This legislation will be a win for everyone involved."