



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Borrow-and-Spend Senate Republicans Approve Nearly \$5-Billion in Tax Cuts & Budget Increases While Opposing Healthcare Restructuring

LIZ KRUEGER March 13, 2007

Republican plan includes \$3.3-billion in tax cuts, \$1-billion in spending increases, and \$500-million in tax loopholes with no explanation of how they will balance the budget

Albany—State Senator Liz Krueger today criticized Senate Republicans for approving \$3.3-billion in new tax cuts, \$1-billion in increased spending, leaving \$500-million in tax loopholes open, and rejecting the Governor’s healthcare budget proposals. Just moments before approving these unsustainable increases, the Republican majority unanimously opposed Governor Spitzer’s initiatives to restructure our broken healthcare system in order to move to a more cost-effective model of prevention, primary, and community-based care.

The Republican increases throw money at a broken system without enacting restructuring to alleviate the financial burden that the State has placed on local government to cover ballooning Medicaid costs. These local communities, saddled with Medicaid costs, must often increase property taxes in order to meet their healthcare obligations.

“They are trying to pretend that they are not increasing the budget, but the numbers don’t lie, they do,” Krueger declared. “There is no logic in their spending and if you follow the numbers you will find there is no logic in their arguments. There is also no plan for how we

will account for \$4.5-billion in new spending and lost revenue, and there is no initiative to re-evaluate how we are currently spending the taxpayer's money. That is the very definition of fiscal irresponsibility.”

“Joe Bruno has turned his caucus into the borrow-and-spend caucus,” she said.

In opposing the Governor's initial healthcare budget, Majority Leader Joe Bruno ignored procedural protocol and brought the Governor's bill to a vote before the bill had made its way through bi-partisan conference committees, the step in which initiatives are debated and amended before a full vote of the Senate. Instead of proposing amendment or an alternate budget proposal altogether, the Republicans proposed a resolution that was devoid of specifics and provided no blueprint that would keep the budget process moving forward.

The Governor's proposals recognize that New York's healthcare delivery system is not organized in a way that meets the primary care needs of New Yorkers. His proposals are structured around a multi-year plan to comprehensively make New York the healthiest state in the nation.

Among the instrumental initiatives in the Governor's Healthy Living package:

Expanding eligibility for Child Health Plus;

Targeting public health campaigns to address the prevention and treatment of cancer, diabetes, obesity, asthma, stroke and heart disease and depression.

“As is, our system is fatally flawed in concept and implementation. We have spent decades focusing on helping those who are sick, without enacting programs that would reduce sickness in the first place. This costs us money and lives. Emergency rooms are filled to the brim with patients. One approach is to build bigger emergency rooms while another is to shift course so that fewer people end up needing emergency rooms. I prefer the latter,”

Krueger said.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has found that half of all deaths are linked to unhealthy behavior and unsafe environment, conditions which the Governor's proposals begin to address.

"The problems in our healthcare delivery system have long been known. The Senate Republicans could have taken action to fix them. But they didn't. They left that responsibility for someone else, just as future generations will be stuck footing the bill for their spending increases. It seems a bit disingenuous for them to stand on the floor of the Senate and say 'yes the system needs to be fixed' and then turn around and vote against the first serious proposals that would begin to fix it," Krueger said.

She then pointed out the glaring hypocrisy of Senate Republicans in casting themselves as the party whom patients and families trust on healthcare related issues.

"These are the same folks who have passed endless bills reducing coverage in private and public health plans, and who have repeatedly wanted to cut Child and Family Health Plus because there were too many poor kids signing up," Krueger said.

"Millions of New Yorkers are in crisis mode because they have to choose between healthcare, rent, or food. There are a lot of kinks to work through, but the Governor's proposals at least put us on the right track. Continuing with the status quo will not move us toward a better system in which all New Yorkers have access to healthcare, and where HMO's and insurance companies don't continue to pocket billions of dollars in profits without providing adequate services," Krueger concluded.

