



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Krueger & Senate Democrats Propose Sweeping Legislative Reform Package, Endorsed by Good Government Groups

LIZ KRUEGER January 15, 2007

Republicans Unanimously Oppose Reform Package

Albany--State Senator Liz Krueger led the Senate Democrats in unveiling a comprehensive legislative rules reform package, endorsed by New York's leading good government groups, including Common Cause NY, the League of Women Voters, the Brennan Center, NYPIRG and others.

"The results of the last two elections should have been a clarion call for legislators that New Yorkers are not happy with how this government is being run. Apparently Senate Republicans didn't get the memo," Krueger said. "In a sense, Democrats won today by proposing and debating a strong reform package, while Republicans must now defend their no votes to their constituents."

Despite unanimous opposition to these reform proposals, no Republican member offered any explanation of their opposition. They refused to allow a recorded vote on the measure, instead spending over an hour in procedural maneuvers fighting Democratic demands for a simple roll-call vote.

“Raising one’s hand and voting yae or nay is the most basic form of democracy. It does not reflect very well on the New York State Senate that members of the Republican Majority do not believe the people of New York should know how they vote on critical issues,” Krueger declared.

“Implementing comprehensive changes are vital in order for reform efforts to succeed. We need sweeping changes to the ethical standards by which we govern, the campaign finance standards by which we campaign, and the ways in which bills are moved through committees, voted on, and implemented. When it comes to reform, a piecemeal approach does not work. The credibility of this Legislature has been wounded, and it will take more than a few band-aids to fix that.”

The Democratic reform package included 8 key areas:

- 1.) Equal Resources for Senators: All Senators receive equal staff and resources, and that committee staff and resources be allocated proportionately to Majority/Minority representations;
- 2.) Elimination of the "canvass of agreement" and end of limit on discharge motions;
- 3.) Eliminates the requirement that Rules Changes be referred to the Rules Committee for consideration and the creation of a new oversight committee, the Rules and Administration Committee;
- 4.) Committee Reforms:
 - i.) allowing the ranking member or 1/3 or committee members to place a bill on the committee agenda as well as the ability to hold public hearings;
 - ii.) the requirement of committee attendance;
 - iii.) allowing any Senator to co-sponsor a bill;

- iv.) requiring detailed committee reports on each bill reported to the floor and available on the internet.
- 5.) Off the Floor Changes: Prohibits "off the floor" committee meetings, except upon consent of Ranking member or 2/3 of members;
- 6.) Member Items:
 - i.) requires complete disclosure of items in budget bills, including name of sponsor, funding recipient and amount of funding;
 - ii.) prohibits member item funding for private, for profit entities;
 - iii.) requires member item disclosure on Senate web site.
- 7.) Ethical Standards: bars other than de minimis gifts below \$25;
- 8.) Conference Committee: Creates standing conference committee and a process to conference similar—but not "same as"—bills.

“My colleagues and I offered spirited arguments for why these reforms would create a more democratic, deliberative and transparent legislature. Unfortunately, the Senate Majority was unwilling to either engage in debate over the merits of these proposals, or support them. The phrase Reforming Albany is very catchy, as proven by how many people use it come election time. However, it should be more than a campaign slogan—it should be a promise we make and keep. We are losing the confidence of voters,” Krueger concluded.