



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Bill Perkins

Senate Minority's Illegal Attempt to Grab Control of NY Senate

BILL PERKINS June 19, 2009

Senator Bill Perkins on the Senate Minority's Illegal Attempt to Grab Control of NY Senate

As you have certainly heard, there have been some very dramatic events in the New York State Senate in recent days. I want to share my perspective on these developments.

On Monday, June 8, our Majority in the Senate began an historic end-of-session push to deliver true reform on a wide-range of policy issues and legislation. The Minority, with the help of an upstate billionaire who is not an office holder or public servant of any kind, attempted an illegal power-grab which has since thrown the entire Senate into a deadlock, stalling and in fact threatening key aspects of the peoples' agenda.

My Majority Conference colleagues in the Senate and I worked diligently this entire session to serve the needs of all New Yorkers. We are outraged by this blatant attempt to buy the Senate, subvert the will of the people, and prevent needed change from taking place. Nevertheless, we must move forward.

Our Majority understands that a 31-31 tie between the parties means that there is no way to resolve this impasse and complete the legislative session without cooperation and compromise. That is why we offered the Minority the olive branch of an authentic,

bipartisan governance-sharing agreement that kept everything 50-50. Many states have faced similar tied legislatures and arrived at workable solutions for sharing responsibility. Our Conference feels that our obligations to the people of this state are far greater than any partisan politics. We must move past party labels to get the peoples' business back on track.

Sadly, the Minority Conference does not agree. They rejected our offer to share governance of the Senate equally for the duration of the legislative session, and instead have held fast to the notion that the Senate agenda should be bound by their illegal coup attempt. The Minority is focused on taking power that has not been ceded to them by the voters, and placing it in the hands of people like Dean Skelos, Pedro Espada and their billionaire sponsor. This is unacceptable.

The Minority mutiny is particularly troubling in light of the fact that the Senate has, under our Majority Conference's leadership, acted responsibly on so many issues of concern to everyday New Yorkers. In the past six months the Senate Majority has taken steps to close the gap on last year's and this year's budget deficits; we crafted an MTA bailout bill that included accountability and transparency measures that nobody else was fighting for; we reformed the Rockefeller drug laws after four decades of misguided policy; we made tough choices and instituted health care reform; we held the line on education, restoring \$700 million in proposed cuts; we passed a bigger, better bottle bill to help fight pollution; we created over 80,000 new jobs, including green jobs and targeted employment for low-income New Yorkers; we put 1400 new police officers on the street; and we made New York's tax code more fair and more progressive than it has been in a generation.

Yet our work is not complete. There is a great deal that my office continues to work on every day, including resolving constituent and community issues and providing legislative oversight of executive agencies that fall within the purview of the Senate's Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions, of which I remain the Chair.

Still, the Minority Conference's hijacking of the Senate can have devastating consequences. That is because until we resolve the conflict and get back to chambers, we cannot proceed with many important matters that remain on our legislative agenda, including vacancy decontrol to help preserve affordable housing; school governance reform; approval of sales tax extensions that would yield \$800 million dollars this year for the city of New York alone and prevent layoffs; marriage equality; and other measures to allow the state to receive federal stimulus money.

Please know that I, and my fellow Majority Conference colleagues are ready, willing, eager and able to move past this deadlock. All we need is willing partners on the other side of the aisle. The time for petty bickering and the supplanting of the public good in exchange for personal gain is over. The New York State Senate is not for sale.