



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

Statement by Senator Thomas K. Duane on the State of the Senate

THOMAS K. DUANE June 30, 2009

June 26, 2009

Dear Friends:

On June 8th the Senate Republican minority attempted a coup on the floor of the New York State Senate in order to regain the majority. This unprecedented move was made possible because of the defection of two Democratic senators: Senator Pedro Espada of the Bronx and Senator Hiram Monserrate of Queens.

This illegal power grab has brought the Senate to a standstill. It is unacceptable and I will continue to fight alongside my Democratic colleagues to bring order back to the Senate. We must pass crucial legislation, such as bills that strengthen tenant protections and preserve affordable housing, safeguard reproductive health rights, grant marriage equality to all New Yorkers, protect transgender people from discrimination, address school governance, streamline testing for HIV/AIDS, give families a voice in incapacitated patients' health care, and take up many other vital issues.

As of the time of this writing, Senator Monserrate has returned to the Democratic conference creating a situation in which the Senate is in an untenable deadlock at 31-31. This

turn of events mandates that a form of “power sharing” be negotiated and agreed upon between the parties. The Democratic conference has outlined various equitable proposals in order to provide a template to vote on pressing issues. Unfortunately all have been rejected by Senator Espada and the Senate Republicans.

This week, as a result of the impasse, Governor Paterson has repeatedly ordered the State Senate to meet in Extraordinary Session. Sadly, these sessions have been unproductive. While Governor Paterson has directed the Senate to pass vitally important progressive legislation, I could not in good conscience advocate for a vote on bills, unmatched by Assembly counterparts, due to their dubious legality and legitimacy, as part of a one house Extraordinary Session. I strongly believe we cannot gamble with the validity of any legal or civil rights. We must, albeit while withstanding the frustration, wait until the Senate legally, legitimately and fairly functions. Please know that I continue to have confidence that we will pass, with bipartisan support, legislation we need and demand.

I have many feelings about the current state of the Senate. I am angry, embarrassed and sad. I also have hope. Together, with the rest of the Democratic conference, and I hope every Senator, we will bring decorum, dignity, fairness, and bipartisan collegiality, as well as hard work with real results, to the Senate.

I promise to keep you updated as things develop in Albany. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 212-633-8052.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Duane

New York State Senate

29th District