



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

State Senator Liz Krueger Worked 7 Years to Pass Historic Rules Reforms in the New York State Senate

LIZ KRUEGER July 15, 2009

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New York—State Senator Liz Krueger hailed the passage of rules reform today. "These rules reforms represent a historic shift in the way the State Senate will now function," said Senator Krueger. "For decades New Yorkers have been clamoring for an end to business as usual in Albany and I am proud that after years of my arguing for these changes, we will finally have taken a giant step toward a more fair and transparent government that truly serves the people's interests."

Senator Krueger has been one of the foremost advocates in the State Senate for government reform, making it a focus of her agenda ever since her first campaign in 2000. In 2002 Senator Krueger unveiled her plan for reform in a proposal titled "Waking Up the State Senate: 34 Proposals for Reinvigorating Democracy in Albany through Rules Reform." Since then, Senator Krueger has pushed the Senate to pass these proposals every year. She even went so far as to take the State Legislature to court in 2005 in order to force reform on constitutional grounds.

"When I got to Albany, I was appalled by the antidemocratic, secretive practices I found and knew the Senate needed change," said Senator Krueger. "There had always been a lot of talk

about reforming Albany but very little action. Today Reforming Albany became more than a campaign slogan—it became a promise we kept."

The reforms passed today will increase transparency, strengthen the committee process, provide the public with more information, and give every Senator a greater ability to bring bills to a vote in committees or by the full Senate. In addition, term limits will be placed on legislative leaders and committee chairs, and resources for members will be equitable so each Senator can function effectively to represent their constituents.

"The biggest winners from today's events are the citizens of New York. The new rules will create a more transparent and open legislative process that will improve the ability of the Senate to address the serious issues facing New York," said Senator Krueger. "While it took decades for Albany to reach the depths we saw in the past month, I am proud that these reforms are the culmination of all that transpired. After 7 years as a minority Senator and just 6 months in the majority, these reforms are especially gratifying."

Detailed changes to the rules include:

PROCEDURAL REFORMS TO EMPOWER INDIVIDUAL SENATORS

- * Officers and Leaders of the Senate will be term limited to 8 years.

- * Members will have greater ability to bring bills to a vote through the Motion for Chamber Consideration. Any sponsor of a bill on third reading can, with the vote of a majority of the members elected, have the bill placed on an active list for a vote by the full Senate.

- * The Motion to Discharge will be eliminated and replaced by a Petition for Chamber Consideration to empower members to get bills out of committee and onto an active list for

a vote by the full Senate. This will pull a bill from committee to the active list upon the acceptance of a petition signed by 3/5 of the members elected (38).

* Non-sponsor amendments will require that the amendment be accepted by the sponsor, in which case it will be immediately adopted on the floor; or if not accepted, will require a vote of a majority of the members elected; any bill amended will retain its place on the Calendar until it has properly aged, the sponsor will be able to move to remove his or her name from the bill if he or she chooses.

* To increase public notice, the Active List will be published by 8 p.m. the prior evening or 2 hours after session ends the prior day (whichever is later).

* The committee process will be extended until the 2nd Friday in June. After that date, all referrals would be to the Rules Committee.

STRENGTHENING THE COMMITTEE PROCESS

* Committee Chairs will be term-limited to 8 years.

* Committee membership will be proportional to each Conference's representation in the Senate as a whole.

* Committee chairs and ranking members will be able to hire their own committee staff, independent of leadership.

* A new committee discharge process will enable a bill sponsor to request through the Journal Clerk that a bill be considered. The committee chair will be required to place the bill on an agenda within 45 days for a vote.

* These changes will give greater power and authority to individual committee chairs and members so they can consider, judge and act on legislation independent of leadership.

* The Temporary Committee on Rules and Reform is continued and will report back by December 1, 2009 regarding substantive reforms to the number and composition of the

committees. The committee will develop plans to reduce the number of committees so no member is serving on more than four committees. This will enable the Senate to eliminate proxy voting and ensure members can devote an adequate amount of time to serving on each committee.

- * Committees will have guidelines to encourage public hearings on bills and invite speakers to committee meetings to discuss pending legislation.

- * To create greater public notice, committee agendas will be released by the Thursday prior to the scheduled meeting by 3 p.m. The Chair will be able to add or remove up to 4 bills with the ranker's consent up to 24 hours prior. All members will receive notice of the additions or deletions.

- * Committee reports will be required annually regarding the committee's legislative and oversight activities.

GREATER OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- * The Senate will proactively disclose information, such as records of committees, agendas, votes, minutes, reports, attendance, fiscal notes, votes on the floor, session transcripts, calendars, and expenditure reports by making this information available on its website.

- * Committee Meetings and hearings will be recorded and webcast.

- * Chamber proceedings will be archived and accessible through the website.

- * There will be a joint resolution with the Assembly to create a Legislative Cable channel which will broadcast session and joint hearings.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

* For the first time, the administration and operations of the Senate will be conducted in a fair and nonpartisan manner, including access to services necessary to all members and their offices, without regard for the member's conference.

* A more equitable distribution of Senate resources will provide individual Senators with greater ability to effectively serve and represent their constituents.

* All 62 Senators will have equal access to Senate services such as mail and printing and a formula will provide satellite offices for Senators with larger geographic districts so they can better represent their districts.

* Discretionary amounts for legislative initiatives and other community grants will be more equitable going forward.