



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Senator Krueger Hails Passage Of “Sunshine Week” Legislation Increasing Transparency In Government

LIZ KRUEGER March 19, 2010

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SENATOR KRUEGER HAILS PASSAGE OF “SUNSHINE WEEK” PACKAGE OF LEGISLATION INCREASING TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT

(Albany, NY) In honor of National Sunshine Week, Senator Krueger (D-Manhattan) announced the Senate has taken another step forward in lifting the veil on State government operations and proactively opening the legislative process to the public by passing a package of ‘Sunshine’ policy bills. The package is designed to provide the public with greater access to information they were long denied in order to hold State government accountable and to the highest standards.

Sunshine Week is a national initiative to open a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. An essential aspect of the democratic process is keeping society informed of the deliberations and decisions being made by policymakers, which the Senate Sunshine Policies attempt to achieve.

Bills in this package include:

- S7109 / L. Krueger, which requires each agency, and house of the legislature to proactively publish frequently requested records on its internet website;
- S4284 / Valesky, which requires open meetings to be held in a room of adequate size for citizens and officials to attend;
- S3195B / Valesky, which allows any meeting of a public body to be recorded, broadcast, webcast and photographed as long as it is not disruptive to the proceedings of the meeting; and
- S7054 / Oppenheimer, which clarifies the court's authority to invalidate an action taken when the public body acted in violation of the open meetings law.

“The Democratic Senate Majority has made great strides in making legislative information easily accessible to the public,” Senator Krueger said. “New Yorkers want and deserve to know what their

elected officials are fighting for on their behalf and to be able to participate in the decisions which affect their lives.”

New rules stipulate that open meetings must be held in a room which can adequately accommodate anyone who wishes to attend, and that any public meeting can be recorded, photographed, broadcast and webcast as long as it is not disruptive to the meeting. In addition, each agency, and house of the Legislature, must post frequently requested records to its website. Public access to government decisions is further promoted by making clear that a court may invalidate an action taken in violation of the open meetings law.

"Over the last year, the Senate has dramatically increased the amount of information it provides to the public on its website" said Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan). "I am pleased that the Senate has worked successfully to increase citizens' access to information about government in the State of New York, acting appropriately to use our technological resources in a way that is responsive to these times."

This legislation would require each agency, and house of the Legislature, to proactively publish frequently requested records on its internet website. By providing frequently requested information electronically, agencies can direct individuals who request information to their websites instead of sending hard copies, making the process quicker and more efficient.

Senate Democrats have implemented on the Senate website a searchable database where the public can access information such as, recordings of session, public meetings and hearings as well as committee records (nysenate.gov/video_archives). The Senate Democrats recently began publishing payroll reports and making them searchable and available online (nysenate.gov/opendata) to the public, making the Senate one of, if not the only, government entity which does so. "The legislation we passed today will build on this new transparency and improve public access to information throughout all of State government, much in the same way it has for the Senate," said Senator Krueger.