



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Serrano Discusses State Parks, Arts, and Living Museums in Senate Budget Resolution

[JOSÉ M. SERRANO](#) March 23, 2010

Senator José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx) today discussed yesterday's Senate Budget Resolution, and acknowledged that although it is has been a difficult budget season, the resolution presents a positive step in the right direction for State Parks, the Arts, Tourism, and Living Museums.

"The budget process has been an arduous one, and our work is not yet finished," declared Serrano. "However, my colleagues and I have presented solutions that don't neglect the needs of the people of New York, while simultaneously supporting the agencies that have always provided recreational and educational programming for families and individuals throughout the state."

STATE PARKS AND TOURISM

Governor David A. Paterson's proposal included massive cuts to State Parks, that would have, for the first time in history, resulted in park closures throughout New York. The Senate Budget Resolution restores funds to State Parks which, if enacted, will prevent the closure of 57 State Parks, while reducing operations at 22 additional parks- saving the state money, while keeping parks open.

Serrano, who serves as Chair of the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, has strongly advocated for State Parks since the Governor announced his budget proposal in January. During a press conference last month, he suggested the State use bonding appropriations for State Parks capital projects and shift that money to Parks' operating aid. The Resolution presented yesterday adopted this model in order to avert unprecedented park closures.

“Cutting is always necessary during difficult fiscal times, but I maintain that we must cut smart and with creativity. Families all over the country have had to make tough sacrifices in this economic climate- they should not also have to sacrifice their local parks.” A recent poll conducted by Sienna College showing that a 9:1 majority of New Yorkers disagreed with closing State Parks confirms the Senator's thoughts.

The proposed Executive Budget also eliminated the tourism matching grants program. The Senate recommended keeping a dedicated line in the budget for this program. “Due to its culture, beauty, and diversity, New York generates billions in tourism dollars yearly. During this economic downturn, the State needs to support local economies, and the Tourism Matching Grants Program does just that by, on a local level, investing in an industry that has always provided a solid return on investment .”

Serrano, who is the sponsor of three bills (S7164, S7163, S7151) aiming to protect State Parks and to improve the efficiency of the Matching Funds Program.

NYS&A AND LIVING MUSEUMS

The Governor's original budget proposal looked to cut funding for the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) by \$6.5 million. The Senate Budget resolution restored \$3.25 million for NYSCA's grant-making activity.

"NYSCA has remarkable experience funding the arts, benefitting both large and small organizations throughout the state. In turn these cultural organizations bring commerce and jobs to our neighborhoods," said Serrano, who last year unprecedentedly directed \$250,000 in his potential discretionary funds, also known as member items or legislative grants, back to NYSCA for the purpose of grant-making activity.

Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquariums (known as Living Museums) were fully restored to \$9 million. "Our Living Museums are vital to the educational and economic growth of our communities, and provide truly unique and rewarding experiences for everyone- regardless of their economic status," said Serrano. "I am extremely pleased that their funding was restored."

Senator Serrano alongside Assemblyman Steve Englebright recently held a Joint Committee Meeting for Arts Day 2010, during which they discussed cuts to Arts Organizations and Living Museums throughout the state. Senator Serrano then provided responses for YouTube testimony submitted by various New York arts organizations.

POST-PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT

The Senate also proposed the creation of an Empire State Film Post-production Tax Credit.

Senator Serrano recently announced his support for a competitive post-production film tax credit, and is the sponsor of the bill (S4943) that will help make this program a reality. Aside

from providing a tax credit for all film production companies doing post production work in New York, the Serrano bill also offers an internship/tuition reimbursement program for SUNY and CUNY students who want to explore the field of post-production.

The Senate Resolution also accepted the Executive Proposal to extend the current film production tax credit program.

“The current film production tax credit program has been a total success in terms of creating living-wage jobs for New Yorkers and supporting our local economies. The bill I introduced is the next natural step for us to take when it comes to bringing production and post-production jobs into our communities, and goes one step further by providing educational and professional opportunities for college students.”