



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

Senator Johnson: Calls for Conference Committees To Resolve Budget Differences; Stop Political Games

CRAIG M. JOHNSON April 16, 2010

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I, and many of my colleagues, have become frustrated by the lack of action on finalizing a budget. That is why we called upon Senate and Assembly leaders to immediately convene conference committees in order to hammer out our remaining differences and get a responsible plan approved.

Unfortunately, late budgets are nothing new in Albany. For decades, Republicans controlling the Senate and Democrats in charge of the Assembly failed to approve on time budgets.

This year, however, the lack of a final plan created a dangerous opening for political mischief that, if successful, could have crippled state government. The Senate Minority last week tried to amend the executive branch's budget extender legislation to include road projects that the Governor had halted. It is a worthy cause wrapped in a nefarious motive.

The budget extender was already approved by the Assembly and no matching amendment was offered by that house's minority conference, nor by anyone else. If the Senate Republican ploy had succeeded, the extenders bills would not have matched. In the absence of such legislation, state entities such as the State Police, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health would have been forced to shut down, cutting off

vital services to every resident of New York State.

In addition, providers of health services financed by Medicaid, reimbursements to pharmacies participating in the EPIC program, expenses associated with the Child Health Insurance Program, school districts receiving excess cost school aid and recipients of unemployment insurance would not have gotten much-needed funding from the State.

The Republicans knew we wouldn't allow these catastrophic events to occur and that is why they felt comfortable pursuing this cheap and irresponsible political stunt to curry favor with the contractor unions.

I have been your State Senator for three years – a much shorter time than the vast majority of the other 211 State Legislators – and a member of the majority for one. However, I have been there long enough to see first-hand the special type of dysfunction that breeds in Albany. This is an issue that should had been addressed decades ago, but the least we can do is stop it now.

That is why I am strongly urging our colleagues in the Assembly to join us in starting the conference committee process as soon as possible.