



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Senator Krueger Pushes “Governor's Questions Hour” Through Senate Increasing Transparency in Albany

LIZ KRUEGER June 15, 2010

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(New York, NY)-- New legislation sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) and Assembly Member Micah Z. Kellner (D-Manhattan) which will create a Governor's Questions Hour and open up debates over the direction of the State to public scrutiny, was passed in the Senate today. The bill will require the Governor to stand before the Legislature for an hour each month during the legislative session to answer questions from Senators and Assembly Members, in a televised interaction similar to the British tradition of Prime Minister's Questions.

A Governor's Questions Hour will help break the logjam in Albany's political process, giving New Yorkers direct access to the discussions that shape the State's policies. By pushing political debates out into the open, it will create a remedy to the backroom dealings and bickering for which New York's State Government has become notorious.

"New Yorkers are sick of being left in the dark while a select group of people hide behind closed doors to have important discussions and debates," said Senator Krueger. "The British have been holding open and regular Questions to the Prime Minister since 1961 and I am always amazed by how much is revealed about their government during this back and forth exchange. The citizens of New Yorkers have made it clear that change is needed in Albany and we owe it to them to open-up this dialogue and allow direct insight into how the government is run and what is discussed between the Legislature and the Governor.

"New Yorkers are sick of the failures that three men in a room have brought them," said Assembly Member Kellner. "People want to see an ongoing constructive dialogue between their Legislators and the Governor to move our State forward. And having a regular Questions Hour would do just that."

The bill will give Legislators an opportunity to question the Governor about the strategic direction, financial status, and general governance of the State. It will require the Governor to stand before the Assembly and the Senate on alternating months during the legislative session, responding to inquiries from Republicans and Democrats alike. The bill specifies that the percentage of time allotted for questions from members of the majority and minority parties will be based on the percentage of representation of each party.

"Public dialogue and debate are critical to democracy," Assembly Member Kellner said. "But as it stands, there is no opportunity for Legislators and the Governor to get together on a regular basis to openly talk about the issues we're facing. New Yorkers want accountability from their elected officials—and that means putting our debates and competing ideas out in the open."

"Wouldn't it be great to have public, open dialogue between the Governor and NY State's two 'houses of Parliament'? Since these sessions would be available for TV and live webcast, we

just need to have some better rules than the British about what types of fruit can and cannot be thrown. As I recall, they favor tomatoes," joked Senator Krueger.