



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pedro Espada Jr.

Espada Keeps His Word to Senior Citizens:

PEDRO ESPADA, JR. June 30, 2010

| ISSUE: **SENIOR CENTERS**



RAIN Bailey and Tolentine-Zeiser Will Stay Open

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When State Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr. visited senior centers in his 33rd district in May during pre-Mother's Day festivities, he presented the seniors with a momentous gift and this reassuring message: "Your centers will not be closed."

Staying true to his pledge, Sen. Espada today announced that Tolentine-Zeiser and RAIN Bailey senior centers, both in the district, will not be shut down. City Hall had planned to shutter both centers and dozens of others by July 1st.

“The prospect of one senior center being closed was bad enough, but the threat of two centers being closed in the same district was very disturbing to me and the seniors who consider these facilities their second home,” Sen. Espada said.

“Seniors were calling my office every day, distraught and depressed, pleading for help. I told them to ignore the rumors and reports – that I would not allow the budget to be balanced on their frail shoulders as one of our most vulnerable populations that relies on these centers for services, daily meals, socialization, and recreational programs,” Sen. Espada said.

Sen. Espada had fired off letters to the Mayor on May 24th and again on June 24th urging that he reconsider. On June 14th, Sen. Espada and his colleague Sen. Ruben Diaz, Sr., chairman of the Senate Committee on Aging, were instrumental in securing the Senate’s \$18 million allocation in the state budget earmarked to save centers that the city had targeted for closure.

Over the past two weeks, Sen. Espada remained in close communication with the Mayor’s office and worked with City Councilman Fernando Cabrera in negotiations with City Hall to keep Tollentine-Zeiser and RAIN Bailey open.

“Through a team effort involving Councilman Cabrera, Sen. Diaz, me and others, thankfully, we were able to save our senior centers,” Sen. Espada said.

“We are so happy for our seniors,” said Elizabeth Sanchez, director of the Tolentine-Zeiser Senior Center. “They were very upset to learn that the center was being closed. We had everything packed, but now we’ll just have to unpack and have a big celebration. We are very

grateful to Senator Espada. Our seniors love him, and now that he has helped save their center, they love him even more!”

Added Belinda Lacen-Cave, director of the Rain Bailey Senior Center, “Emotions were running high because this facility is so important to many lives. This is a second home to our seniors, a place they come for a meal, conversation, recreation or just a hug. We are grateful to Senator Espada. We know how hard he fought to make this happen.”