



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Eric Adams

NYS Senator Eric Adams Joins His Conference Colleagues To Introduce A Comprehensive 22-Point Bipartisan Rules Reform Package

ERIC ADAMS January 18, 2011

NYS Senator Eric Adams and his conference colleagues have introduced a 22-point rules reform package for independent redistricting, ethics reform, and budget reform. The conference called on the sixty-two members of the State Senate to unite to adopt a sweeping rules reform resolution to consolidate and protect historic reforms passed in 2009 and include additional proposals to create a more fair and accountable legislative body.

The supplementary adjustments proposed in the resolution are developed from recommendations issued by the bipartisan Temporary Committee on Rules and Administration Reform and suggestions contained in a Senate report. An equitable balance of resources, increased transparency, and a more inclusive legislative process will empower each Senator to serve his or her constituents more effectively.

The budget process is about to begin; the Executive's budget introduction takes place in two weeks. At this time, rules from the past legislative session have been temporarily extended; it is vital that changes be fully debated and adopted as soon as possible.

Major proposed rules changes:

- Mandate equal staff allocations, resources, and member item initiatives for all Senators
- Require legislative leaders to convene conference committees
- Change the number of standing committees, the rules governing the introduction of legislation through the committee process, and public notification of legislation.

Summary of Rules Reform Resolution (22-point plan):

- Establish equal staff allocations for all Senators, with supplements for chairs and rankers, with ranking minority member supplement equal to 50 percent of chair supplement (Most states have equal allocations for all Senators, regardless of party affiliation).
- Provide equal access to resources for all Senators
- Mandate equal member item initiative allocations for all Senators and ban member item initiative funding for any organization in which the Senator or family member serves as a board member or officer
- Establish a non-partisan administrative staff of the Senate
- Create a proportionate ratio for central staff based on conference membership

- Require legislative leaders to convene conference committees and allow a sponsor or a chair of committee of origin to call conference committees
- Reduce the number of committees from 32 to 23 and change membership so all committees have an odd number of members
- Reduce maximum number of committees per Senator from seven to five
- Eliminate the ability of a committee to introduce a bill, so all bills will be identified as sponsored by a specific Senator
- Allow ranking minority members or a majority of committee members to call committee hearings
- Require members to be present at committee meetings to cast committee votes
- Increase the requirements for reports on bills coming out of committee to include purpose of the bill, the proposed changes to existing law, section-by-section analysis, fiscal impacts, the bill's procedural history, committee or subcommittee votes, any individual member's comments on the bill, and organizations which support and oppose the bill.
- Require active lists to be published 24 hours before session, and prohibit supplemental active lists without unanimous consent.
- Eliminate the ability of the Committee on Rules to consider a bill without being on a printed agenda for 24 hours unless it comes with a message from the Governor
- Require bills amended with hostile amendments on the floor to retain their place on the third reading calendar

- Reduce the number of members required to support a Petition for Consideration on the floor from three-fifths to a majority
- Eliminate the ability to vote aye without recommendation on bills in committee
- Require committee votes on whether to conduct a hearing or mark-up before a bill is reported out of committee
- Ensure that chairs and ranking members have full power to hire and fire committee staff
- Require that committee budgets and member staff allocations be completely transparent and published on the Senate website
- Require that after a hostile amendment, a bill on the calendar move to first reading
- Require Senate leadership to request conference committees to reconcile similar bills passed in both the Senate and the Assembly, including budget bills

NYS Senator Eric Adams states: “Our reform package consolidates and expands on the improved rules adopted with bipartisan support in the 2009 session. It will enable the NYS Senate to become a more deliberative, efficient, and judicious legislative body and enhance the quality of the legislation we produce. It will streamline Senate operations and foster transparency and accountability.

“We must do the people’s work: reform governance, balance the budget, reduce taxes, and create jobs, jobs, jobs!”