



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Senators Klein, Savino, Valesky, Carlucci Announce Formation of Independent Democratic Conference

JEFFREY D. KLEIN January 5, 2011

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*State Senators Jeffrey D. Klein, (D-Bronx/ Westchester), Diane Savino, (D-Staten Island/ Brooklyn), David J. Valesky, (D-Oneida) and David Carlucci, (D-Rockland), today announced their departure from the Senate Democratic Conference and the formation of a third legislative conference.*

The four senators will caucus together as the Independent Democratic Conference. As a group, they will push for commonsense solutions to the problems facing this state, break the hyper-partisan gridlock that has gripped this chamber, and work to restore the public's trust

in its public officials.

“This is a new beginning,” Senator Klein said. “The squandered opportunities, ethical lapses, and mismanagement of the last two years have left the residents of this state distrustful and disappointed in the State Senate as an institution and their government as a whole. As members of the Independent Democratic Conference, we will work to bring integrity back to this house and once again make government a tool to improve people's lives.”

The IDC has pledged to work with Governor Cuomo, the incoming Senate Majority and Minority, and its other partners in government to get New York's fiscal house in order, foster job creation, and cap property taxes. They will also be pursuing a legislative agenda that includes enacting tough new ethics reforms, establishing non-partisan redistricting, and protecting a woman's right to choose.

“We are, and remain, Democrats who are committed to Democratic principles,” Senator Savino said. “The Independent Democratic Conference will allow us to make a clean break from the dysfunction that has defined Albany for far too long and allow us to govern in a manner that our constituents expect and deserve.”

The IDC creates a new paradigm in the State Senate, which for the first time will have more than two legislative conferences. There will be no concentration of power in the Independent Democratic Conference. Each member will have an equal say and an equal vote when it caucuses.

“This conference represents a new way of conducting the people's business— with civility, a commitment to sound policy, and a willingness to work together,” Senator Valesky said. “In time, this may become a new model for legislative governance; but for now, it is the only choice that makes sense.”

“The late Senator Morahan understood the importance of setting aside partisan politics to get work done for the residents of New York State,” Senator Carlucci said. “As a member of the Independent Democratic Conference, I will uphold that tradition. It is time to stop thinking about the next election and start thinking about the next generation.”

-30-

## **The Independent Democratic Conference**

### **2011 Agenda**

**Job Creation** This past October, New York State was given the dubious distinction of having the least hospitable tax climate in the nation. The key to job creation in New York is removing obstacles to business investment and business creation through broad-based reforms that benefit all sizes and types of employers all across the state.

#### **Streamlining Upstate NY Economic Development Efforts to Attract and Retain Businesses**

We will continue to strongly encourage development of programs like the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit that foster economic development in Upstate urban cores and villages. Support for core industries, including medical and pharmaceutical research, healthcare and renewable energy, and agricultural priorities, including providing relief for farmers and promoting local foods, is also critical.

**Property Tax Cap** Our new legislation to impose a 2% annual tax cap on property tax levies will require school districts and other local governments to live within their taxpayers' means and will help create a more sustainable funding stream than the current one that drives seniors from their longtime homes and makes it unaffordable for young people to start families in the communities where they were raised.

#### **Real and Immediate Mandate Relief for Local School Districts and Municipalities**

State government must also do all that it can to help school districts and local governments control their costs by eliminating non-essential state mandates and encouraging a more streamlined government through regionalization, shared services and functional consolidations.

**Identifying Government Waste and Creating Government Efficiency** Last year we committed ourselves to investigating costs on a State agency-by-agency basis. In the coming session, we will switch our focus to State government wide issues that would allow us to highlight larger possible savings such as an examination into simplifying business regulations and their costs, controlling costs in the Legislature and modernizing State government functions

**Women's Reproductive Rights** New York's reproductive health laws are outdated and inadequate. The Woman's Reproductive Health Act of 2011 is needed to ensure that New York gives women an affirmative right to their reproductive health and would enact the critically important reforms in New York's laws governing women's reproductive health such as protecting the right to privacy in reproductive decision-making, safeguarding not only the right to end a pregnancy but also the right to bear a child and the right to use or refuse birth control.

**Ethics Reform in Albany** The Ethics in Government Now Act ( S.573) has been introduced to comprehensively reform the operation of the Legislative Ethics Commission and to establish new prohibitions against nepotism for hiring relatives in the same legislative chamber

**Independent Redistricting** Concerned New Yorkers have indicated that the current reapportionment process exposes the legislature to claims that the deck is stacked to favor the re-election of incumbents and to discourage potential challengers. Senate Bill S. 660 will create an independent commission which would enable the reapportionment process to unfold in a manner that debunks any claims that legislators are primarily concerned with

apportioning districts in order to facilitate their own re-elections.

**MTA Tax Reform** Gross mismanagement is blamed for 1/3 of the MTA's current fiscal debt. Our goal is to conduct a comprehensive forensic audit of the MTA to find areas of waste and corruption and determine the need and the efficacy of the current MTA tax.

**Medicaid Reform** An examination of Medicaid and is needed because of the centrality of the issue to the State's long-term fiscal health. Our focus will be to start to target individual areas of Medicaid for examination with the goal of cost savings to all New Yorkers. Possible targets are Long-Term Care, Transportation Services, or care for patients with disabilities. Furthermore New York is one of a few states that disburse Medicaid funds through its counties. This system has caused New York to lose control of spending. It is imperative that we we consider disbursing Medicaid funds from the State level, eliminating the need for counties to pay and wait for reimbursement.