



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

## Senator Malcolm Smith Urges Advocacy During Autism Awareness Month

MALCOLM A. SMITH April 13, 2011

Senator Malcolm A. Smith (D-Hollis) is urging New Yorkers to learn more about autism and its effects on children and their families, as well as what can be done to help the cause.

Since the 1970s, April has been designated by the National Autism Society as National Autism Awareness Month in order to highlight the growing need for concern and awareness about autism. Only recently, however, has autism become a national focus as rates have skyrocketed.

“Autism affects millions of families across the country. By raising awareness about this disease we increase the ability of parents and caregivers to properly identify the signs of autism and give these children the proper attention they deserve. We must all commit our support to continue increasing awareness to ensure children with autism are provided with the opportunities to realize their dreams and potential,” said Senator Smith.

Last year, the Senate Democrats passed groundbreaking legislation to protect children with autism. The legislation – passed by both houses, but vetoed by the Governor – sought to

establish a national model requiring health care coverage for autism, saving families of children with autism thousands of dollars a year.

Autism is a neural development disorder. Indicators of the disorder include impaired social interaction and communication, as well as restricted and repetitive behavior. According to the Center for Disease Control, just three decades ago only 3.5 children out of every 10,000 were diagnosed with autism. However, current rates indicate 1 in every 110 children is afflicted.

The increasing rates display the need for all New Yorkers to learn more about the disorder, and the implications it has on the life of effected children and the families that care for them.

Some ways you can do this include:

- Hosting an awareness event (learn more at [www.1power4autism.org](http://www.1power4autism.org)).
- Showing your colors by wearing the autism awareness puzzle bracelet (learn more at [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)).
- Passing out informational materials to your community (learn more at [www.autism-society.org/shop\\_downloads](http://www.autism-society.org/shop_downloads)).
- Taking action by getting involved with advocacy efforts (learn more at [www.vote4autism.org](http://www.vote4autism.org)).

Recognizing early identification signs of autism in children is vital to helping children and their parents understand the disorder and how to effectively take action. Research has indicated that the earlier a child is diagnosed, the sooner they can benefit from one of the specialized approaches to treatment and education.

For more information about autism, visit [www. autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) and [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html).

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Malcolm A. Smith is the New York State Senate Immediate Past President Pro Tempore (2008-10). He currently serves as Secretary of the NYS Democratic Conference and ranking member on the Banking Committee.