



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

IDC: 'Most Successful Legislative Session in a Generation'

JEFFREY D. KLEIN June 28, 2011



Independent Democratic Conference Fulfills Key Agenda Items, Passes 68 Bills During 1st Year

The Independent Democratic Conference today fulfilled key parts of its legislative agenda and passed 68 bills aimed at improving the lives of all New Yorkers during its inaugural legislative session, which they called the “most successful in a generation.”

“From an on-time budget to the passage of critically important legislation to enact a property tax cap, make marriage equality the law of the land and create tough new ethics standards in Albany, New York is in a better place now than it was before this legislative session,” said Senator Jeffrey D. Klein, (D-Bronx/ Westchester.) “Additionally, we're proud

of the issues that the IDC has advanced as a conference and our success in passing legislation that will help save money and improve the lives of all New Yorkers.”

In January, Senator Klein, Senator Diane Savino, (D-Staten Island/ Brooklyn), Senator David J. Valesky, (D-Oneida), and Senator David Carlucci, (D-Rockland/ Orange), formed the Independent Democratic Conference with the vow to 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.

They released a legislative agenda that included the passage of a tax cap, mandate relief for schools and local governments, a comprehensive ethics overhaul, as well as rooting out government inefficiency.

Measures creating a cap and beginning the mandate relief process passed this session.

Additionally, the IDC put forth an ethics reform package, many elements of which were part of the final bill that passed the Legislature. This package included IDC proposals that excluded sitting legislature from serving on the primary government watchdog entity, putting into place stricter disclosure requirements on outside income and clients, as well as a measure that stripped public pensions from public officials convicted of abusing their positions.

The IDC has issued 15 legislative reports and advanced proposals to revamp state government that would save New York more than \$1 billion during the next decade.

“This has been a historic and productive legislative session,” Senator Valesky said. “I am pleased that the Independent Democratic Conference has played a role in creating and supporting bipartisan, common-sense legislation that will reduce the property tax burden, increase government efficiency, provide higher ethical standards for public officials and encourage economic development.”

The IDC was also the only legislative conference that is 100 percent pro-marriage equality. In May, at the beginning of the final push to bring this critically important legislation to a vote in the State Senate, the IDC partnered with advocates and same sex couples from around the state to release a study showing the economic benefits of marriage equality. New York stands to gain \$391 million in increased economic activity, revenue, and savings during the three years after it is made law.

“This was the session where people beat politics,” Senator Savino said. “The Independent Democratic Conference was formed in order to put politics aside and work on putting New York back on the right track. I am proud to have helped bring equality to New York and bring accountability to Albany.”

This session, the State Senate passed IDC priority legislation that would:

- Help schools and local governments cut down on costs by making it easier to band together and form cooperatives to provide healthcare and benefit plans to their employees (S.2843). The benefits of this legislation were detailed in the IDC reports: *A Discussion on Mandate Relief for New York State Schools* and *Recommendations on Streamlining Healthcare Costs and Identifying Cost Saving Measures at the Municipal Level in New York State*.
- Drive down auto insurance premiums by cracking down on auto insurance evasion (S.4847). This practice, where New York residents unlawfully register their cars out of state, was detailed in the IDC report: *Auto Insurance Rate Evasion, A Report on the Fraudulent Practice of Insurance Rate Evasion Through Illegal Out-Of-State Vehicle Registration*.
- Boost life-saving organ donation in this state, (S.3885). New York currently ranks third from the last in organ donation. Lauren's Law, named after 11-year-old heart transplant survivor Lauren Shields, would increase donations by requiring drivers to make a choice about organ donation when filling out their license applications. More information can be found in the IDC's report: *Lauren's Law*.
- Strengthen New York's Agriculture industry and increasing the availability of produce grown in Upstate, Hudson Valley and Long Island communities to undeserved urban areas. This would be done under measures allowing the Empire State Development Corp. to issue loan and grants for the construction of green markets (S.627) and to build and expand distribution networks (S.614B). These measures were discussed further in the IDC report: *Preserve, Produce & Grow: A Plan to Help NY Agriculture*.
- Require a forensic audit of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, (S.4637), as discussed in the IDC report: *The Case for a Forensic Audit of the MTA*.
- Codifying a ban on Caffeinated High Alcohol Flavored Malt Beverages, (S.3889A). The dangers posed by these beverages, which the FDA has called unsafe, and their availability to minors, are discussed in the IDC report: *Alcopops: The Underage Drink of Choice*.

"I am proud of the work that we have done in this legislative session," Senator Carlucci said. "We have passed legislation that will begin to ease the tax burdens that have been driving New Yorkers from their homes and instituted policies that will aid in restoring New York's economy and create jobs."

