



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo Votes for Port Authority Reform Legislation

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. March 15, 2012

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Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) today announced that the New York State Senate has passed legislation he cosponsors to help make the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey more open, accountable, and transparent to residents.

“The Port Authority has been heading in the wrong direction for far too long. The disgraceful way it treated residents during last year’s toll increase process is just one of far too many examples of why it needs to change the way it operates. More accountability and transparency are sorely needed and long overdue. That’s exactly what this legislation would bring to the Port Authority,” said Senator Fuschillo, Chairman of the Senate’s Transportation Committee.

The legislation was introduced following the Port Authority’s complete lack of transparency in approving a toll increase last year. The Port Authority announced the initial toll increase proposal only two weeks before the scheduled vote and held just one day of public comment hearings just three days prior to the scheduled vote. Adding insult to injury, media reports stated that not a single Port Authority Commissioner attended any of these public hearings. The final amended proposal was approved less than 24 hours after it was announced, giving the public no time to review it or offer comments.

Additionally, there have been numerous reports which have raised questions about the Authority's spending practices and financial management. A preliminary audit released in February characterized the Port Authority as "a challenged and dysfunctional organization" and highlighted serious issues with the Authority's finances.

The "Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Transparency and Accountability Act," (S5878C), which is sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R-Staten Island) and cosponsored by Senator Fuschillo, would:

- Require an independent auditing of the Port Authority;
- Lay out specific requirements for open public meetings and publication of minutes of meetings of the Board of Commissioners;
- Establish specific requirements for public hearings to be held in the port district of New York and New Jersey to discuss any proposed fee, toll, charge, or fare increase;
- Establish Audit, Finance and Governance Committees;
- Require financial disclosures and training for Commissioners and certification of those disclosures by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Port Authority and the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, and the Chief Financial Officer of the Port Authority; and
- Create a fiduciary responsibility for Commissioners.

The New Jersey State Legislature is also considering an identical version of the legislation.

Senator Fuschillo will also be holding a joint New York-New Jersey public hearing on April 20th at 10:30 am in Staten Island on the Port Authority's finances and lack of accountability.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly for consideration.