



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Statement on Censorship of Debate and Late-Night Passage of Reapportionment Plan, Other Legislation

LIZ KRUEGER March 15, 2012

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Albany, NY – The following statement can be attributed to Sen. Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan):

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Last night, around midnight on the morning of the Ides of March, my Senate Democratic colleagues and I refused to support a backroom deal on redistricting that protects incumbent legislators by disenfranchising minorities, discriminating against voters from New York City and Long Island, and blatantly violating the Voting Rights Act.

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When we tried to raise these issues in debate, the Republican Senate leadership silenced us, –violating a previously agreed-to timeframe for debating the measure. Faced with a bill that would violate New Yorkers' voting rights, and denied even the opportunity to speak on the

floor of the Senate, we stood up for New Yorkers in the only way left to us – by standing up and leaving the Senate Chamber. We refused to legitimize their cowardly censorship of floor debate, an open attack on deliberative democracy. We were thus marked absent on the vote, but let me be clear: my vote was NO!

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Then, continuing into the dead of night, the Senate passed bills that had just been introduced on Tier VI Pensions, casino gambling, teacher evaluations, and DNA collection. All of these bills were then voted on while the ink was still wet, after I and my Democratic colleagues had left the chamber. These are all important legislative measures that should have been reviewed, discussed and debated on the merits – but instead they were passed between midnight and 4 a.m., with no real opportunity for legislators to review or consider them.

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There was no committee review or discussion and no public notice, nor did they age for three days as required. They were delivered with Messages of Necessity from the governor – which allows skipping the normal process under emergency circumstances. What was the emergency?

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This procedure was used because passing them was the tradeoff for the governor agreeing to sign the gerrymandered redistricting lines. I and my colleagues would have loved the opportunity to study and debate these specific proposals, but because that was not permitted, we were prepared to vote no last night.

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I feel my colleagues made an important statement by refusing to participate in the farce that occurred last night in the Capitol. There has been much talk about a 'new New York' and in particular a new, functional, transparent Albany, but passing bills in the dead of night certainly does not meet that description. With backroom deals on redistricting and constitutional amendments, with 4 a.m. votes on bills too new to even have been read, with the doors to the Capitol literally locked down to shut out the public – we have been brought back to the ugly days of the past.