



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

Let Students Come to Albany!

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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LET STUDENTS COME TO ALBANY!

You should know that Albany is the place where New Yorkers come to let our government know how strongly people feel about any number of issues. Groups come to Albany to lobby on behalf of senior citizens, the DREAM ACT, Earth Day, organized labor, tenants, the gay agenda, Catholic values, libraries, farmers, nurses, etc. (I cannot tell you how many times I have been approached by lobbyists who use the stories of Black and Hispanic children to push for their causes.)

It's not unusual to see labor unions and public officials bring students to Albany to lobby elected officials about educational matters. Not only do these field trips help students to see our government in action and see how people with different ideas can work together

respectfully to make our laws, but it also teaches our children about the importance of their own voices in the political process.

You should know that on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, Success Academy Founder and CEO Eva Moskowitz will be holding what she hopes will be “the largest civic field trip in history.” Her 22 charter schools will be closed for the day, so parents, principals, educators, and students can travel to Albany to call on Governor Andrew Cuomo and the State Legislature to undo Mayor Bill de Blasio’s recent decision to prevent three charter schools from using space inside New York City public school buildings. Mayor de Blasio’s decision also includes plans to decrease the enrollment of the American Dream Charter School in the South Bronx from 100 students to 75.

My dear reader, bringing Charter School students to Albany on Tuesday is a wonderful thing to do. This is the perfect place to bring Charter School students who are facing eviction, who are facing the closing of their schools, and who face the possibility of having no place to learn and study. Albany is THE place for Charter School students to come on Tuesday to let everyone know what they are up against!

This will be a fantastic educational experience for students to learn that they also have the right to participate in our government. It will be a good civics lesson for students to learn that they can fight for their rights and defend their education. It is important for them to see how our government works.

It is laughable to hear anyone publicly state that these children are being used as political pawns, or that Tuesday’s trip is counterproductive to quality education. To the contrary, Tuesday’s trip to Albany will be an excellent educational day for all who attend. Students who attend will learn some of the very basic and core values of participatory democracy.

In case you don't know, Tuesdays in Albany have been designated by the New York State Legislature – both the Senate and the Assembly – as Lobby Days. This has been done exclusively with the intention to provide a lobby day for New Yorkers – regardless of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability – to lobby their legislators about issues that are important to their lives and communities. This is encouraged by the New York State Legislature. It is not called being dragged into someone's political agenda; it is called lobbying.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am looking forward to Tuesday's Charter School Day in Albany, and I congratulate Eva Moskowitz and all of the educators involved for teaching our children how to defend their education and for making this part of their curriculum.

This is Senator Rev Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.