



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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Victory vs. Progress

The aim of argument, or of discussion, should not be victory, but progress- Joseph Joubert

One of the frustrating things about being a state senator is that some of my less admirable counterparts in Albany will hold good and valuable legislation hostage in an effort to advance their unrelated political agendas. If you have the courage to stand up to these strong arm tactics, they sick the high-priced mouthpieces of special-interest groups on you who incessantly spin misleading headlines to distort the truth. To be candid, they absolutely count on citizens not following closely and hope wave after wave of sensationalism will somehow influence the outcome. It's nothing more than gamesmanship, plain and simple, and it's happening right now with the New York's Women's Equality Act.

Your legislators in Albany are considering several measures that will most certainly advance and protect the rights of women in New York State. Reforms include guaranteeing equal pay for women, expanding protections for domestic violence victims, stronger safeguards against discrimination and sexual harassment, and tougher human trafficking laws that will free prosecutors to strike at this hideous crime happening throughout the state. Both parties in the Senate and Assembly, as well as the Governor, support these reforms. In fact, we've been in agreement on these points for nearly 18 months! It should be a

slam dunk, right? So why hasn't it gotten done?

The answer is “partisan politics.” A group within the New York City-led bloc in the legislature is demanding that these reforms be lumped together in a single bill with a measure that would expand late-term and partial birth abortions and which will also allow non-doctors to perform those abortions. And despite pleas from legislators, Republicans and Democrats alike, to unchain this very different measure from the rest, this faction will not allow them be considered separately. They flat out refuse to let it pass or fail on its own merit. You’re free to make your own determination as to why.

Here’s what Amy Paulin, a Democrat Assemblywoman, had to say – “The Senate voted unanimously on the measures. The only reason to keep it together is because it helps the Senate Democrats, in their minds, increase their majority. It’s completely – it’s an election year. It’s politics over substance to keep the bills together.”

We’ve discussed this legislation extensively for more than a year in Albany and it’s been discussed extensively here at home with family and friends as well. Along with most New Yorkers I fully support the nine original measures. I also fully and unequivocally support the faction’s right to make their case on late-term, doctorless abortion and have a straight up and down vote based on their rationale. I do not support their denying New Yorkers not one – but nine whole pieces of beneficial legislation that we all agree on – in order to ram through one controversial one. And they have great nerve to obfuscate this reality and dumb down the argument in the press.

I can simply think of no fairer way to address such a contentious measure than to let it be resolved democratically – to be discussed, debated, negotiated and voted upon on its own. Most reasonable people agree that one of the most critical issues of our time deserves nothing less. It is not to be traded like so many marbles in an elaborate school-yard game.

Everyday people, the ones who do most of the living, working and tax paying, hate when special interests and party-politics get in the way of delivering results. So do I. We're fed up with the partisan gridlock in Washington which is so mired in political bickering they haven't even passed a federal budget in years. So it exasperates me that these important and necessary reforms are being hijacked for purely partisan reasons right here at home.

As I write this there are seven days left to go in our legislative session in Albany. My hope is that common sense will prevail and that the points we all agree on will be passed and signed into law. My personal appeal to these legislators is that they put progress over victory. Anything less would be a complete insult to our wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends.