



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Senator Avella Brokers Compromise on Queens Public Library Bill

TONY AVELLA June 19, 2014

NEWS in Senator Tony Avella Senate District

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The bill will aim to strengthen oversight and promote transparency amid recent controversy and clear mismanagement

(Albany, NY) Today, State Senator Tony Avella announced a momentous agreement with State Assembly Member Jeffrion Aubry to bring real reform to the Queens Public Library amid recent controversy and clear mismanagement within the institution which has prompted City Council hearings, a City audit and Federal investigations.

Senator Avella, the first elected official to call on the Library Executive Director Tom Galante to step down following the controversy, has been working for well over a week to facilitate negotiations and foster a compromise with Assembly Member Aubry to reform the Library.

After many productive discussions, both members of the legislature signed an agreement today allowing the State Senate to pass Assembly Member Aubry's bill. The signed agreement includes two vital provisions authored by Senator Avella which will require the Board of Trustees to hold yearly public budget hearings and make the Queens Library explicitly subject to the State and City Freedom of Information Laws.

Senator Avella stated, "I am happy to have gotten the Assembly's Queens Borough Public Library Reform Bill to the Senate floor for a vote. There was no question that strong and swift action had to be taken to address the clear mismanagement within the Library. Assembly Member Aubry and I have also agreed that we will work together in the next legislative session to revisit this issue and put together additional reforms to further regulate the Queens Borough Public Library operations in the best interests of the people of Queens."

"I am also pleased that the Assembly bill we passed today was amended by Assembly Member Aubry to include important provisions I sought including a yearly public budget hearing process and provisions explicitly stating that the Queens Borough Public Library is subject to the New York State Freedom of Information Law. Despite all the different opinions making their rounds in the press, I am glad that we were able to move past the politics and enact real reform within an institution that receives an enormous amount of public funding."

The agreement includes two provisions that will require both parties to introduce and seek passage of a chapter amendment during next year's legislative session that would:

- make the Queens Public Library director and executive personnel explicitly subject to New York City Conflict of Interest Law
- appoint one employee from the Library system to serve as an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Wanda Williams, Director of Political Action and Legislation of DC 37 which represents a majority of library workers, issued the following statement in support of the bill:

"I want to thank Senator Tony Avella, Assembly Member Jeff Aubrey, John Hyslop, President of Local 1321, and their respective staffs for their leadership, commitment and

hard work. The Queens Public Library reform legislation would not have been possible without their diligence and persistence. Senator Avella's negotiations with the IDC and the Republican coalition made this bill's consideration in the Senate possible."

The Queens Borough Public Library Reform Bill will now head to Governor Cuomo's desk for his signature.