



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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The Quid Pro Quo of Politics

RUBEN DIAZ July 30, 2014

What You Should Know

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The Quid Pro Quo of Politics

You should know that in politics, there is something known as quid pro quo. In some form or another, this strategy is used by elected officials to negotiate business, positions, agendas, and personal interests - in exchange for political favors.

You should know that this practice of political negotiations is seen by the law as a criminal, corrupt and illegal. Therefore, anyone who is caught committing this act is taking the risk of ending up wearing a striped uniform, and living in a 6 foot by 8 foot cell in prison.

You should know that in the business of politics, quid pro quo is illegal, corrupt and unethical - but only when it is committed by the little guy. When the act is committed by one

of the big guys – like a mayor, a governor, etc. – then it is considered to be a masterpiece, an act of political genius, and even a phenomenal success.

I first became aware of this practice in 1977 when the late Ramon Velez, the Godfather of New York's Hispanic community wanted to get something out of Bronx Senator Joseph Galiber. Ramon Velez called upon one of his allies, Américo Martínez– who held a prominent position in a New York City agency – to run against Joseph Galiber. Ramon Velez promised Américo Martínez that if he would provide the money and the troops, that Américo Martínez would become a New York Senator. Américo Martínez moved forward to coordinate his campaign and got Israel Martínez to run against Assemblywoman Estella Diggs. They put their team together and Américo Martínez collected his petitions.

However, Ramon Velez sat down with Senator Joseph Galiber and after a little quid pro quo time, Ramon Velez got he wanted and then asked Américo Martínez to disappear, to drop it, to cease and to desist. The only problem for Américo Martínez was, as happens to many people, that first taste of political power can have a similar effect on a person like a powerful drug does – one taste and you feel hooked forever, and you need it to survive. After he received a request to drop out of the race, Américo Martínez found himself alone and destroyed, and as history tells, he disappeared to Puerto Rico.

Nowadays, our beloved New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo has found himself involved in what appears to be various - and seemingly nefarious acts - of quid pro quo.

As you already know, when New York State Senate Co-Leader and Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeff Klein and his IDC colleagues, Senators Diane Savino, David Carlucci, David Valesky and Tony Avella abandoned the Senate Democratic Conference and made an alliance with the Senate Republicans, they engaged in what looked like quid pro quo to keep the Republicans in power. But after Bill de Blasio was elected Mayor of New York City, a

movement formed that was made up of mayors, unions, Democratic millionaires, and the Governor himself, all joined to get rid of IDC Leader Jeff Klein and his four IDC colleagues and their alliance with the Republicans.

In that effort, they called upon former City Councilman, former Assemblyman, and former Attorney General Oliver Koppell, promising him that they would raise a million dollars for his campaign against Jeff Klein. They promised Oliver Koppell union support. They promised Oliver Koppell all kinds of support from the Mayor and the Governor. Governor Andrew Cuomo became the leader of the movement.

After Oliver Koppell listened to all of those marvelous enticements and offers of becoming an elected State Senator from the Bronx, he went out announced that he would run to unseat Senator Jeff Klein, and he collected signatures.

Surprise, surprise ... all of those people sat down with Jeff Klein, and after what seemed to be a little quid pro quo, Jeff Klein decided to abandon the IDC's alliance with the Republicans and come back to the Democratic fold. Oliver Koppell was asked to drop his bid to run against Jeff Klein, to drop it, to cease and to desist, and to disappear. Now Oliver Koppell has found himself alone because everyone he thought would support him has gone over to support Jeff Klein. The Governor, the Mayor and the unions have abandoned Oliver Koppell.

You should know that all of the challengers against the five IDC rebel Democrats – except for John Liu who still hopes to unseat Tony Avella – are gone. (And I have to give credit where credit is due and say that the Queens Democratic organization who organized and accepted John Liu's candidacy, as of today, has not abandoned John Liu.)

You should also know that there is another apparent act of quid pro quo that Governor Andrew Cuomo is being accused of that has practically exploded in his face. This is about his

manipulation of legislators and his creation of a commission to investigate public corruption. Many believe that Governor Andrew Cuomo's Moreland Commission was formed to threaten to send legislators to jail if they did not bow down to him and support his agenda.

Once again, those involved sat down together to talk. "What's in it for me?" "You do this for me and I'll do that for you." "You give me this and I'll give you that." They all came out like one big happy family, and as the story goes, the Governor had to disband his Moreland Commission.

My dear reader, Governor Andrew Cuomo's quid pro quo acts involving the Moreland Commission were made very public on the front page of the New York Times, and even became a 6-minute joke on Jon Stewart's The Daily Show. Accusations about Governor Andrew Cuomo interfering with his own Moreland Commission are not being ignored by editorial boards, columnists, reporters, and bloggers, and it doesn't look like the issue will go away any time soon.

Ladies and gentlemen, even though we don't really know how this particular embarrassment will end or how U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara may proceed in any official investigation of Governor Andrew Cuomo, I am afraid that like so many of the powerful, astute, brilliant and politically savvy leaders that have preceded him, Governor Andrew Cuomo might just pass through history as masterful politician who had nothing at all to do with official crimes involved in quid pro quo.

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