



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS January 26, 2015

Where is the Assembly?

For the third time in the past year, I joined the overwhelming majority of my Senate colleagues in, once again, voting for a series of women's equality bills that fight discrimination in our laws, ensure equal pay for equal work, and assist women who are victims of human trafficking, violence, and harassment. These are great bills that would do a great deal to address the inequality plaguing so many women in our society. So, with each of these bills having passed the Senate, the question remains, where is the Assembly?

It's just getting ridiculous. Some state Assembly Democrats are running a shell game, our press is mostly ignoring it, and good and valuable legislation for women is ultimately being held hostage to their partisan political games.

Let me give you the back story. All of last year, a group of Democrats in the Assembly demanded that these reforms be lumped together with a separate bill that would expand late-term abortions and would allow non-doctors to perform those abortions. Knowing that the bill would not pass on its own, they demanded that either all the measures be passed together or none would pass at all. Then they went about tarring Republicans as being anti-women.

Now, you'll hear them say that the abortion bill merely "codifies" Roe v. Wade. But it does much more. You see, the bill would remove any criminal liability for anyone who performs abortions illegally. Late term abortions, partial birth abortions, and abortions by non-doctors would no longer be criminally prosecuted. Ultimately, anyone breaking the law would only face a possible fine to be pursued in civil court by the State's Attorney General, if he even chose to do so. How many abortion mill horror stories have we watched in the news to now ignore them all and arrive at this poorly thought out decision?

So, despite pleas from legislators on both sides of the aisle to unchain these very different measures and allow them to be debated and voted on separately, Democrats in the Assembly flat out refuse. They are literally holding the rest of the women's agenda hostage and hurting those very women who would benefit immediately from their passage. That's not just unacceptable, it's unsavory. Even their colleagues are fed up.

Amy Paulin, a Democratic Assemblywoman, recently said, "It's an arbitrary political decision that made these bills come together, and arbitrarily is not a good way to legislate. Pass the bills where we make an improvement in women's lives, and let's move on." My esteemed colleague, Democratic Senator Diane Savino called it "pure politics," and noted that there was no threat to a woman's right to choose in New York. I thank them both for speaking out.

Each bill should be allowed to proceed in due course - discussed, debated, and voted upon on its own.

Now is the time for Governor Cuomo to use the weight of his office to advance the women's equality bills and help countless women throughout New York State. It's time for the people of this state to demand progress over politics and for their representatives to take heed. It's time for the Assembly to do what they're sent to Albany to do - discuss, debate, and

vote.

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