



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Rules Reform Committee Represents A New Beginning

DAVID J. VALESKY January 30, 2009

| ISSUE: **RULES**

Last week, in a room deep within the Capitol building in Albany, an amazing thing happened. Five Democrats and three Republicans sat at a table and openly discussed a subject close to my heart—reform—during a committee meeting, laying plans for groundbreaking changes in how the State Senate will operate. And, for the first time ever, it was recorded and broadcast on the web.

Many constituents may be surprised that this is a rarity – members of a committee meeting in full view of the public to have a spirited and fruitful discussion on policy issues. But sadly, it is rare. I am hopeful that it will become common practice.

The Temporary Committee on Rules Reform, by its mere existence, breaks new ground. The committee, which I co-chair with Republican Senator John Bonacic, was formed to assess the Rules process within the State Senate, and to recommend real and attainable reform.

I believe the work our committee is doing represents a new way of doing business in Albany.

The committee is bi-partisan, with representation from across the state. We began two short months ago by conducting public hearings across the state, listening to ideas from good government groups and individuals alike. These hearings were broadcast and are archived on our webpage. Since, we have had substantial discussions and are on our way to building a

consensus on real reforms. All of these are firsts.

This committee is result-driven. Our charge is clear—to present a report to the Senate that contains real and achievable recommendations for reform and a timeline for implementation by April 13.

In addition to the recommendations, we hope that the work of our temporary committee will provide a strong foundation for, and example of, how other policy committees should operate in the Senate.

The overarching goal of reform is to make government more accountable, more transparent, and more responsive, and to maximize efficiencies and run a “smart” legislature.

Seven people in a room with a web cam may seem like an austere beginning, but I believe it is the start of a transformation of the way our government works.

If you would like to see the committee meeting, or keep abreast of our progress, please visit my website.

Senator David Valesky represents the 49th Senate District, and is Vice President Pro-Tempore of the New York State Senate.