



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

## Senator Mason, How Do You Vote?

MALCOLM A. SMITH April 23, 2009

Senator Linda Mason of the Together Our Government Achieves (TOGA) Party, stood up today on the Senate Floor and debated her heart out.

Her bill, which would have empowered the Labor Department to establish a random drug testing program for recipients of unemployment benefits, was defeated by a vote of 16-17.

And no, a Gang of 29 hadn't walked out of the chamber. It was simply Model Legislative Session (MLS) Day in the New York State Senate.

MLS Day is the culmination of a four-month undergraduate internship program that is run by the Senate Student Programs Office.

Students get to work in a member's office, meet with constituents, write letters, perform research and even draft bills, all the while garnering college credit. Their work is also supported by a stipend of a few thousand dollars.

As with a real legislature, not every bill these talented and hardworking Senators draft see the light of day. But this program is an important component of educating and engaging New Yorkers from a young age about how their government functions on a day-to-day level.

Civic participation is the responsibility of every New Yorker. It is only through active citizen engagement that we will continue on our path towards a more effective, productive, and

vibrant legislature. Whether it be through the web or at our numerous hearings and town hall sessions, we seek your input as we do the people's work here at the Capitol.