



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

An Open Letter to Constituents: Rational Compromise Necessary to Move Senate Forward

DAVID J. VALESKY June 23, 2009

As many of you know, the New York state Senate has been mired in gridlock as a result of an illegal and self-serving power grab which attempted to place Sen. Pedro Espada, D-Bronx, as leader of the Senate. This took place June 8, during the last two weeks of session, a critical time when much legislation is passed.

A resolution of this matter has been complicated because the Senate is now equally divided, 31-31. The only logical way to move forward is through compromise, by setting aside our differences for the sake of the public good.

That is what a judge suggested, and that is what the Senate Democratic Conference has proposed by offering a truly bipartisan operating agreement, which is similar to ones used in other states faced with an even split within a legislative body.

The proposal includes rotating presiding officers, an evenly bipartisan conference committee, which would decide on legislation to move to the floor, and rotating floor leaders. It provides for absolutely neutral administration of the Senate through the remainder of the session.

Acceptance of the agreement would enable the Senate to pass critical legislation that, if not passed, could have serious effects on our local governments and taxpayers.

The Republican leadership, with Sens. Dean Skelos and Espada at the helm, has dug in its heels, and refuses even to discuss an agreement unless Espada is recognized as president of the Senate. These tactics are unreasonable and irrational, and do not serve the people of New York state.

I share the public's frustration and anger over this continued stalemate. We must stop the insanity. It is time for reasonable and rational Senate Republican leadership to step forward and begin earnest discussions that will help us arrive at a workable solution.

From crisis can come opportunity -- in the short term, to complete the work of the people in this legislative session, and in the long term, to lay the foundation for a functioning and fair Legislature through significant rules changes, many of which were already in the process of being enacted.

As I write this, negotiations are ongoing. I continue to hope reasonable and cooler heads will prevail, compromise will be reached, and we can resume the people's business, focusing on the issues that really matter to our constituents: creating jobs, expanding economic development opportunities and reducing property taxes.

I will continue to fight for the interests of the people of Central New York and for positive change. It will not necessarily be easy, but, as the saying goes, nothing worth fighting for ever is.