



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Impasse Ends With Key Reforms

JAMES L. SEWARD July 10, 2009

I am pleased to announce that after a brief hiatus, the new and improved New York State Senate is back in business. Admittedly the Albany impasse lasted a bit longer than I had expected or hoped, but key reforms are now being enacted that will change the culture in the senate and clear the way for policy changes that will mean a great deal to upstate New York.

Since the start of the year the New York City political bosses ran the show in Albany and the results have not been good for upstate New York.

The most glaring example is the current state budget, which I vehemently opposed. The plan was developed behind closed doors without input from rank and file legislators, and the secret planners were all from New York City. Upstate concerns were never brought to the negotiating table, and when the budget plotters emerged they presented us with a plan that spends at record levels, hikes taxes by \$8 billion and abandons all thought of economic development and job creation.

Families already struggling to stay in their homes and put food on the table are now looking at another \$2,400 in taxes and fees. Small business owners, the backbone of our upstate economy, are forced to pay higher utility taxes and increased health insurance costs. The cost to register your automobile and renew your driver's license is up. Sportsmen are being charged higher fees for hunting and fishing licenses. The list goes on.

Damage was being inflicted on New York as a whole and upstate was specifically targeted. The rules of engagement had to change in Albany. That's why on June 8th a leadership change took place and sweeping reforms were advanced. In the ensuing weeks there has been a great deal of political theater. Many people have asked, "What is the point?" The answer is historic rules reforms that will help us move forward to improve the operation of the state senate.

These long overdue reforms will create a more open, bipartisan and member-driven state senate. Through these changes each individual senator will have an opportunity to move bills to the floor for an up or down vote. Important pieces of legislation that had been bottled up in committee never to see the light of day will now be brought to the senate for consideration.

The public will also have a clear window into the proceedings on the senate floor. There will be greater public notification of bills on committee agendas and greater notice on active lists for bills scheduled for a floor vote. Committee votes will be posted on the internet providing for greater accountability. You will also be able to view the senate proceedings from the comfort of your own home through new CSPAN style government programming.

During the impasse I stood firm in the belief that the result would be a long-term power sharing agreement that would bring meaningful reforms to the New York State Senate. My goal was to restore upstate's voice in state issues. While it is unfortunate the impasse went on for an extended period of time I am confident that, in the long run, our upstate concerns will now be better served.

We are returning to the business of the people in Albany in a manner that will give each senator the means to better represent their constituents. The citizens of the 51st district are

my top priority and I know these reforms will provide me with the tools necessary to deliver much needed property tax relief and job growth.

We need a strong voice in Albany speaking on behalf of struggling families and upstate businesses desperate for a change. I will continue to be that voice, and carry on the call for openness and transparency in state government that will end closed door deals, rising taxes and out of control government spending.