



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Breaks Silence on Silver and Skelos Trial and Signals Ethics Reform As Priority Issue In Upcoming Session

ANDREI VASILESCU December 11, 2015



**(New York, NY)** Today, State Senator Tony Avella broke his silence on the trials involving Dean Skelos and Sheldon Silver and remarked on the challenges facing Albany's ethics issues. Avella had refrained from comment while the Skelos trial was ongoing due to his involvement in the case as a witness. Now that the cases have concluded with the convictions of Sheldon Silver, Dean Skelos and his son Adam, Senator Avella feels at liberty to discuss the implications of the trials.

Senator Avella was approached by the U.S. Attorney's office and asked to testify in the Skelos trial. As former chair of the Senate Ethics Committee and a longtime champion of ethics reform, Senator Avella agreed to testify and took the stand on Wednesday, November 18th.

"The tape recordings of Dean Skelos and his son were both shocking and extremely disappointing," **commented Senator Avella.** "Although that isn't to say that corruption in Albany is particularly new. For example, I was the first one to call for Sheldon Silver's resignation following the controversy surrounding convicted former Assemblyman Vito Lopez. Still, the tapes played by the prosecution revealed a very calculated misuse of Senator Skelos' position as leader of the Senate, and it was difficult to not be taken aback by their tone. Despite the defense's attempts to portray this as a family matter, it clearly was much more; It was unethical and, according to the jury's decision today, illegal."

During his testimony, Senator Avella said that, although he was not aware of Skelos bartering political favors for pay-outs to his son, he would have called for an investigation had he known, calling the behavior disgraceful.

"Albany will have a defining legislative session ahead of itself. Both the Skelos and Silver trials shed light on exactly the kind of quid-pro-quo environment that is endemic in Albany. It will be up to the legislature to denounce the status quo and offer real solutions. New York politics has a reputation it desperately needs to overturn, but it can only do that with substantive policy that pushes elected officials towards working for their constituents and not themselves," **Avella continued.**

"The IDC recently released a set of ethics reform measures that it will be prioritizing in the upcoming session. Feeling that it would have been inappropriate to comment while the Skelos case was ongoing, I chose not to publicly comment. With the case's conclusion,

however, I can now say that I will not only be supporting the IDC's plan, but also issuing my own priority agenda. It will compile ethics reform bills I have already introduced and new policy proposals I will be looking to introduce. With the momentum in favor of significant reform, we can start making the Silvers and the Skelos' of the State the exception instead of the rule."