



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

## “Three People in a Zoom Up to Old Albany Budget Tricks as NYS Suffers from COVID-19 Pandemic”: Tedisco Calls for Policy-Free, Barebones State Budget to Address COVID-19 Pandemic & Fund Essential Services

SENATOR JIM TEDISCO March 28, 2020

With just days to go before the April 1<sup>st</sup> New York State budget deadline, Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville) today is calling for a policy-free, barebones state budget to maintain essential state services and to continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and not to load it up with any controversial new policy measures.

There is currently no negotiated budget bill language available for legislators, the public and the media to review and analyze.

Senator Tedisco noted that given the national state of emergency due to the COVID-19 virus and the fact that the state Capitol has been closed to all visitors for weeks, and that many legislators will be voting remotely, it is not in the best interests of a functioning democracy to move forward on major, new policy proposals when the public and all stakeholders are not able to weigh in. Moreover, the ability of legislators to safely and appropriately debate the budget bills will be hampered.

“I’ve often quoted the esteemed journalist, Bob Woodward, that in ‘darkness, democracy dies’ when it comes to secret government. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve replaced three

people in a room for secretive, closed door budget negotiations with 'three people in a zoom' conference calls who are up to the same old Albany budget tricks crafting a state spending plan with zero transparency," said Senator Jim Tedisco.

"We have a state budget in excess of \$170 billion, but given the seismic impact of the coronavirus on our state's economy, we really don't yet know how much money the state has to spend moving forward. I don't believe major policy changes should EVER be a part of ANY state budget, let alone in a budget year during a national crisis. Let's pass a barebones state budget that funds our essential services and helps our state and local governments address the COVID-19 pandemic and then, when this public health and economic crisis is over, and with public input, we can weigh and debate each issue on their own merits," said Senator Tedisco.