



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

Jacobs Urges Senate, Assembly Leaders to Call Legislature Back to Work

SENATOR JACOBS April 23, 2020

| ISSUE: **COVID-19, LEGISLATURE RETURNING TO WORK**



(Buffalo, NY) – New York State Senator Chris Jacobs has asked the leadership of the New York State Senate and Assembly to call both houses back into session and implement the rule changes necessary to allow Senators, members of the Assembly, and their staffs to continue to work remotely.

“New York is facing the most serious and challenging crisis in our lifetimes, and while governments role in responding has never been greater, both houses of the state legislature sit idly,” said Jacobs. “The state budget approved earlier this month proved we have the ability to utilize technology to work remotely and adhere to the COVID mitigation protocols. I see no reason why we should not be doing the people’s business.”

In a letter to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Jacobs highlighted numerous examples of technology that are either currently available, or that could easily be implemented, that would enable an effective return to legislative business. Among them were Wi-fi and iPads for electronic voting and programs like Zoom to enhance discussion and debate in virtual sessions and committee meetings.

In the letter Jacobs also pointed to both statewide concerns and local issues needing to be addressed as justification for why the representative bodies needed to return to session.

He emphasized the need to make amendments to the Green Light Law that would address federal law enforcement concerns and restore access to Trusted Traveler Programs. “Almost 300,000 New Yorkers are negatively impacted by this border dispute and more than \$30 billion in trade between New York and Canada is at stake,” said Jacobs. “Rectifying this cross-border issue will be an important part of our state’s economic recovery,” he added.

Jacobs said that philosophically he believes a co-equal and representative branch of government has an obligation to work on behalf of the people they were elected to serve, especially when they can do so safely. He also said the stage of the pandemic in different communities, as well as pressures to reopen the economy, dictate that the Senate’s return should be immediate, and that he would hope the Assembly would follow suit.

“As New York and neighboring states begin to examine how and when to reopen for business, the legislature must be prepared to consider and implement whatever steps are

necessary to help restart our economy,” said Jacobs. “We have a responsibility to ensure the best policies and initiatives are pursued and we cannot meet these obligations if we are not working and functioning accordingly,” the Senator concluded.