



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jessica Ramos

Senators Ramos, Biaggi, Jackson, Assembly Members Simotas, De La Rosa, Common Cause Urged Legislature to Resume Session Remotely

JESSICA RAMOS May 7, 2020

| ISSUE: **COVID-19**



Just 10 Days Remain On Legislative Calendar to Provide New Yorkers Urgent COVID-19 Relief
New York, NY — State Senators Jessica Ramos (Corona, Jackson Heights), Robert Jackson, Alessandra Biaggi, Assemblywomen Carmen De La Rosa and Aravella Simotas, and Susan Lerner, executive director of Common Cause/NY held a press conference to urge the New York State Legislature to resume remote session as soon as possible. The [Albany Times](#)

Union, the New York Times, the Buffalo News, and Daily Gazette have all published editorials urging New York lawmakers to step up and continue to legislate remotely post-budget. Video of the press conference [can be viewed by clicking here](#).

The 213 New York democratically elected representatives of the Legislature have not met remotely in over thirty days, since the budget vote. With just 10 session days left on the legislative calendar — a notably short year due to the election cycle — and no update from leadership about the state of the legislative process, the lawmakers warned this unforeseen break could prevent action on critical bills.

Senator Jessica Ramos said, “The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the holes in our safety net and has identified the many vulnerable New Yorkers we still need to protect,” said Senator Ramos. “In the wake of a public health crisis, our frontline workers aren’t protected by their employers — many times by choice, sometimes by chance — and it’s time we get back to work and pass laws that could protect and save thousands of lives. Who will protect these workers if our government won’t?”

Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY, said, “New York lawmakers haven’t passed legislation, or even held a hearing, since voting on the state budget in March. Meanwhile Governor Cuomo has ruled by executive order, changing [262 laws](#) in 55 days. Other bodies of government, like the New York City Council, have adapted and held a series of crucial hearings. Public service is a matter of moral leadership, and New Yorkers need our elected legislators to step up and do their jobs - legislate remotely.”

State Senator Alessandra Biaggi said, “My colleagues and I are working nonstop on the ground to ensure that our constituents have the resources they need to survive, but that is only one piece of the puzzle. We must also provide systemic relief and long-term solutions for New Yorkers during this time of great need, and that requires legislation. There are a

number of urgent bills that can help our communities, including my Healthy Terminals Act to provide access to affordable healthcare for our essential airport workers, but we cannot get any of them done until the legislature goes back into session. It is our job as public servants to fight for the rights and safety of the people we represent – we must let the legislators legislate.”

State Senator Robert Jackson said, “We must get back to work! There are so many things that need our legislative attention right now during this crisis. We need to provide rent relief, we need to raise revenue, we need to halt austerity. I’m eager to pass a wealth tax on millionaires and billionaires to help fund social services of healthcare and education. I’m eager to ensure that workers who are having trouble accessing unemployment benefits right now because they lack the status of ‘employee’ are reclassified and given access to greater rights going forward. There is, quite frankly, SO much to do.”

State Senator Andrew Gounardes, who was unable to be present but expressed his support said, “We have so much to do in this crisis to keep the public safe, protect our first responders and essential workers, fight on behalf of our schools and hospitals, provide housing relief and ensure New Yorkers who have been laid off or furloughed can put food on the table. As this crisis rages on and exposes our City and State's vast inequities, it's more vital than ever to fight for a more just and fair New York. The legislature must get back to work.”

Assembly Member Aravella Simotas said, “There is little time left in the legislative session and there is so much work to be done. We must resume session to pass long term solutions to increase revenue by taxing the rich, provide resources such as hazard pay to our essential workers during a crisis, and create protections for our most vulnerable. This is not the time to be waiting around. We need action, we need to vote on bills, these policies cannot wait. This pandemic has shown the holes in our systems and the strong need that exists to repair them. I join my colleagues in calling for resuming session now.”

Assemblywoman Carmen De La Rosa said, “I am proud to join Common Cause and my colleagues in the senate and assembly to urge our return to legislative session remotely. Our communities have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and there is a lot of work to do in order to ensure that we address the economic and social hardships that our communities are facing. I have joined my colleagues in introducing and supporting legislation that advances the plight of excluded immigrant workers, tenants and homeowners, small businesses, and communities disproportionately impacted by this pandemic. We must now get back to session to continue the work of the people.”

Senator Ramos also announced she is pushing to pass a comprehensive agenda to provide urgent, much-needed relief to help New Yorkers struggling with the crippling effects of COVID-19. The 13-point policy plan consists of existing and proposed legislation that would help people get through the current crisis and any future states of emergency. The comprehensive package features a mark-to-market tax on billionaires that would generate up to \$5 billion and establish a worker bailout fund. More details to follow on Senator Ramos’ website in coming days.

###