



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Statement by Senator George Borrello on the Senate Majority's Censorship of Mailings

GEORGE M. BORRELLO June 25, 2020

| ISSUE: **FREEDOM OF SPEECH, CENSORSHIP, NYS SENATE**



For more information on the new State Budget, visit my website at: borrello.nysenate.gov

THE 2020-21 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET: AN UPDATE FROM SENATOR GEORGE M. BORRELLO

Our state is in the midst of a public health crisis unlike anything we've seen before.

That is why I advocated for a transparent, bare-bones and "clean" budget, focused solely on fiscal matters and without policies that don't belong in a spending plan.

Regrettably, that isn't what was passed.

Instead, an agenda-driven budget was enacted that ignores the needs of taxpayers, cuts funding to schools, hurts small businesses and will negatively impact our already fragile economy.

Elements of the budget that prompted me to vote "NO" include:

- \$100 million for taxpayer-financed political campaigns;
- Elimination of local control in the siting for large-scale wind and solar projects;
- Unprecedented new powers for the Governor to make even more spending cuts;
- Cuts to education that will hurt schools' ability to meet student learning needs;
- Permanent sick leave mandates that will apply to even the smallest businesses and seasonal operations;
- A styrofoam ban that will raise costs for already hard-hit restaurants and hospitality businesses and threaten 2,000 mostly upstate jobs; and
- A bail reform 'fix' that lacks the number one provision that law enforcement experts agreed was most critical: restoration of judicial discretion.

As the 2020 Legislative Session continues, I will keep fighting for local taxpayers, struggling businesses and farms by supporting common sense policies that will help our economy recover and create the longer-term foundation for growth that we desperately need.

"It is the height of hypocrisy for a party that prides itself on tolerance and champions the freedom of speech protections in the First Amendment to exercise censorship over the mailings of Republican Senators.

"After a two month delay, the Senate's Democrat Majority notified my office that they would not print and mail an informational piece on the state budget unless we revised or removed

sentences they found objectionable. Using political power to stifle the speech of an independently elected state legislator is unconscionable and runs counter to the values of openness and integrity that the Majority claims to revere.

“The constituents in the 57th District work and pay taxes like New Yorkers across the state. They elected me as their representative and it is my responsibility to inform them of the Senate’s legislative actions, through my own perspective. Using its control of the Senate’s taxpayer-financed, in-house printing operation to censor my communication is reprehensible. The entire situation underscores the need for the Senate to contract out its printing operations to an independent firm to eliminate the possibility of political censorship and assure fair and impartial service to every Senate member.”

[Attached is a copy of the censored mailer with the sentences that were targeted for removal/ revision by the Senate Majority highlighted.]