



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Senate Democrats Reject Republican Amendment to Repeal Governor's Power — Again

SENATOR ROBERT G. ORTT July 21, 2020

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Albany, NY — Senate Democrats today unanimously rejected an amendment brought to the floor by Republican Senator Pam Helming to rescind Governor Cuomo's expanded powers, which have been used for over 140 days.

This is the second time Democrats have rejected the Senate Republican Conference's effort to strip broad powers from the Governor, who has issued 54 Executive Orders and changed

hundreds of laws since the start of the pandemic.

“The Governor’s continued use of his expanded powers undermines the foundation of democracy. We have a system of checks and balances that must be restored. While Republicans are willing to lead, Democrats continue to take cover and allow the Governor to make choices that should be up to lawmakers. Democrats should not continually come back to session to pass self-serving legislation only to abdicate the rest of their responsibility to the Executive,” said Senator Helming.

The Governor has mocked anyone who questions the need to rescind his ultimate authority as “stupid,” including good government groups which have called to curb his runaway power.

“Governor Cuomo’s use of broadened emergency power to make critical decisions impacting the lives of New Yorkers must end. People elect lawmakers to do their jobs, and Republicans are willing to tackle all of the issues confronting New York. It is shameful that Democrats let this continue,” said Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt.

“The Legislature is a separate and co-equal branch of government. With remote voting via zoom, there’s no reason the Senate and Assembly can’t reconvene if necessary to negotiate, debate, and vote on legislation impacting over 19 million New Yorkers during this COVID-19 crisis. It’s time legislators from both sides of the aisle join together and step-up to return some checks and balances to New York State government,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

“I voted to give the Governor additional TEMPORARY powers back in March. Temporary is the operative word. Instead of using his powers selectively to address the pandemic, Governor Cuomo has instead heeded the words of his buddy Rahm Emmanuel to never let a serious crisis go to waste. We live in a Constitutional Republic, not an autocracy. It appears the Governor missed that lesson in 12th-grade civics. It’s up to the legislature to make him

remember and only Senate Republicans have the guts to bring it to the floor for a vote,” said Senator Rich Funke.

“While these emergency powers may have been necessary at the start of this pandemic, what began as a two-week ‘PAUSE’ has turned into an indefinite shutdown with no end in sight. The voices of far too many New Yorkers are being completely ignored and it’s just not right. New Yorkers deserve a say in rebuilding our communities and our state, and it’s time to put an end to the emergency powers to ensure their voices are heard,” said Senator Sue Serino.

“New York State legislators are elected by the people and serve as the public’s voice in Albany. Given this important dynamic, it is imperative that a balance of power, as is provided for in the State Constitution, and a system of checks and balances exists between all three branches of state government. I am disappointed that the Senate Majority did not support an amendment that the Senate Republican Conference brought to the floor during today’s session. We must work together for the betterment of our state and those we represent,” said Senator Joe Griffo.

“The dangers and shortcomings of government solely by executive order have become clear. A legislative process without checks and balances goes too far and fails to be effective. Senate Republicans keep putting forth proposals to restore a more balanced government, but the all-downstate, extreme-liberal Senate Majority is not serious about governing or checking the power of the governor. They just keep letting Governor Cuomo do the dirty work,” said Senator Tom O’Mara.

“Our state is too big and too diverse for one person to reign as the sole decision-maker for 19 million New Yorkers. It is time to return to some sense of normalcy in Albany and that includes legislative checks and balances. Senate Republicans stand ready to work, representing and serving our constituents – not passing the buck,” said Senator James L.

Seward.

“We are approaching five months since the Legislature gave the Governor broad emergency powers, far beyond what is needed, wise or appropriate. It is deeply disappointing that the Senate Majority once again voted to continue ceding all leadership to the Governor, even as our state has moved beyond the ‘emergency’ and now must recover and rebuild. In continuing to allow this, the Senate is being derelict in its duties to function as a separate and co-equal branch of government. It is time to return to our constitutionally mandated responsibilities and do the job our constituents expect and deserve,” said Senator George M. Borrello.

“For over 140 days, Governor Cuomo has acted with nearly unrestrained and unchecked executive authority. His expanded emergency disaster powers were supposed to be temporary in nature, not a permanent fixture, and it’s well past time they were rescinded. This or any Governor isn’t king; they are elected officials who must answer to the voters, just like all 213 duly elected state legislators. The amendment our Conference offered was a smart solution to restore checks and balances that have been AWOL in our state government. Senate Democrats should have joined us today in voting for our amendment to remove the Governor’s expanded powers. It’s disappointing that they didn’t have the political courage to stand up for democracy and stand against continued one-man rule. Their failure to do so shows Senate Democrats don’t want to take responsibility and do the job they were elected to do,” said Senator Daphne Jordan.

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