



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Column: Let's Do The Work We Were Elected To Do

PAMELA HELMING January 15, 2021

| ISSUE: **2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

In the midst of a pandemic and economic crisis, the State Senate's first order of business should be passing legislation to accelerate the vaccine rollout, create more COVID-19 testing sites, or assist small businesses in reopening and rehiring. But in our first week of session, the Senate majority did not introduce one bill to address the pandemic or the economy.

The Legislature needs to help lead the state's recovery. That is why I brought to the floor my legislation to end the Governor's emergency powers.

These powers were granted last spring so the state could respond quickly to the pandemic to protect the public's health. Since then, the Governor has enacted or changed hundreds of laws without input from or votes in the State Legislature.

It is time to restore the Legislature's lawful role as a co-equal branch of government. That is how we ensure that the voices of our constituents are heard in the important matters facing the state.

Many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have said they are eager to act on the pandemic and reopen New York's economy. I ask my colleagues in the majority, especially our newest Senators, to join me. We must put our constituents first and do the work they elected us to do.

Senate Republicans plan to bring my bill to the floor until it is accepted for debate and a vote.

The Governor in his State of the State address said elected leaders must lead. I strongly agree. Yet how can we assure our constituents that we are leading? That their views and concerns are being heard when we have abdicated our responsibility?

My legislation does not preclude the Governor from making the quick decisions that need to be made in the interest of public health during the pandemic. It simply precludes the Governor from making all of the decisions alone, without the Legislature's consideration or input.

We must have a say in consequential decisions that affect the survival of small businesses, the security and livelihoods of families, the education and development of children, and the physical and mental health of nursing home residents.

We must implement policies that stop the tide of business closings and job losses. We must consider the higher rates of depression, substance abuse, domestic violence and suicide.

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout was fumbled. Yet the Legislature has taken no action to streamline the vaccination process, support our hospitals and counties, and ensure no vaccine is wasted. Meanwhile, our seniors suffer and our residents continue to lose faith in their state government.

We can and must do better.

I have heard from thousands of my constituents on this matter and they overwhelmingly support ending the Governor's emergency powers. That is why I will continue to call on my colleagues to take action on this. Not for our own interests, but for the interests of the

constituents we have taken an oath to serve and represent.

Watch Senator Helming's remarks on the Senator floor [here](#).