



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

Dear Candidate for New York State Assembly Speaker:

Although this is a difficult time for the Assembly, we believe that it does provide a unique opportunity to reflect and consider how we as a body wish to move forward to provide a better internal process for ourselves and better government for our constituents.

After careful consideration, we have determined that reform can provide greater transparency, increased Member participation, changes in leadership selection, reform in staffing decisions and staff authority. We urge the Speaker Candidates to commit to reforming and modernizing our institution, and we seek your input on the following reform ideas.

Transparency

Should the Assembly be more transparent? For example, should Members know how decisions are made inside of conference? What role should Members play in making decisions regarding committee assignments, agendas, and staff allocations?

Can technology increase transparency? Should we expend Assembly resources to update technology?

What are ways to improve technology, ie., providing wireless access in the Capitol, updating software to communicate with constituents through email and social media? Should the public have access to the Legislative Retrieval System?

Should staff allocation information be distributed openly?

Participation

How much input should Members have in conference decision-making?

Should Members have a voice in leadership appointments?

Should the Majority Conference Leader be appointed or elected?

How can members have a greater opportunity to weigh in on policy and budget decisions before legislative negotiations?

How can we encourage a real and robust debate in committee meetings and on the floor?

Should Members have the ability to get bills voted on in committee and on the floor if there is broad support among colleagues?

Leadership Reform and Staffing

Should the amount of time in the positions of Speaker and Committee Chairs be limited in any way?

Should factors aside from seniority be considered in allocating Leadership positions and committee/sub-committee chairs?

How should Committee and Central staff be hired, and should the Speaker continue to have the sole discretion to hire the staff, direct the staff, and terminate staff?

Should Members have an equal staff budget? If not, how should staffing levels be determined in order to provide high-quality constituent services, and support legislative and policy work?

We recognize that implementation of many of these reforms will require extensive thought, discussion, and further detail. Therefore, we ask that the candidates for Speaker commit to appointing a task force on reform, representing the diversity of the conference. This task force would develop specific proposals on these and other reforms. In addition, we ask that all meetings of the task force be open to all members of the conference.

We believe that these reforms are the best way to restore faith in our ability to serve the public. Any change in leadership must be accompanied by substantial reform in the way the State Assembly functions. Now is the time to move forward to build a better, stronger Assembly.

This letter is sent to each member of the Assembly's Democratic Conference, and each is encouraged to sign on. We understand that reform in the Assembly has been a sought after goal for many years. We look forward to hearing your views on these very important issues.

Sincerely,

Didi Barrett

Brian Kavanaugh

Nily Rozic

Michael Blake

Donna Lupardo

Sean Ryan

David Buchwald

Shelley Mayer

Luis Sepulveda

Anthony Brindisi

John McDonald

Phil Steck

Martiza Davilla

Walter Mosley

Al Stripe

Patricia Fahy

Steven Otis

Dan Quart

Phil Goldfeder

Robert Rodriguez

Carrie Woerner

Todd Kaminsky

Linda Rosenthal