

Editorial

Cautious Optimism Greet's Spitzer's Proposals

In his first address to the state legislature last week, Governor Eliot Spitzer, still riding the crest of an election victory of mandate proportions, continued to lay out his ambitious vision of state government, which he had started to describe earlier in the week after being sworn in as the state's 54th governor.

In the hour-long speech, the new governor touched on every facet within his official purview, from the state legislature to the courts, health care, the educational system and the economy.

At times, there appeared to be apparent contradictions, but these were understandable when one considers the huge area being covered and its complexity. Understandable, too, because these were exploratory gambits from the new chief executive, which must be followed up later on with detailed proposals.

Overall, we found much to agree with—the ethics reforms proposed for elected officials \$6 billion in tax relief for homeowners and calls to improve the state's business climate and economy.

Spitzer also proposed improvements for schools, health insurance coverage for young and old alike and reductions in wasteful spending.

In about a month, when Spitzer presents his first budget proposal, hopefully we will get a clearer idea of how he plans to carry out the new and changed policies he has presented.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to change some of the long-established ways that govern how state officials operate, which has led to several probes of alleged criminal activities. Faulty methods of alleged appropriations and dispersal of millions of dollars in state funds by these few lawmakers must be dealt with to change the public perception of the vast majority of other honest officials.

Of particular importance to the New York City school system is Spitzer's call for a revised and new, transparent school funding formula. The present formula favors suburban districts represented by Republican lawmakers. The changes proposed are intended to help New York

City's educational establishment.

The call for more education spending and making pre-K classes available to every 4-year-old in the state was coupled with Spitzer's proposal to give homeowners whose taxes pay for these programs \$6 billion in real estate tax relief over the next three years.

Reacting to Thursday's oration, Democratic Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver stated, as he had following the speech two days earlier: "There was very little I could disagree with."

Republican Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno was likewise conciliatory in his reaction, saying, "There are things to get things done that you have to kind of swallow hard on, but that's the business we're in."

But the reality of it is that very much of what Spitzer wants to get done will depend on how well he can persuade Silver and Bruno to agree with him. As we all know, this can be very difficult. We'll have to see if Spitzer will be more successful than previous governors.



Hails Local Bookstore

To The Editor:

As I have mentioned in the press, I have been in contact with several companies to bring a large bookstore—such as Borders or Barnes and Noble—to serve the neighborhoods of Astoria. I undertook this project due to dozens of constituent calls asking me for such an establishment. These larger bookstores offer many services and selections that would certainly add value to our community and provide an additional resource for our educated population.

However, I want to ensure that no one overlooks a jewel that already exists in Astoria, Seaburn Books, an independent bookstore located at 33-18 Broadway. This store has a 15-year track record providing great literature to the people in our communities, even supplying many local schools with the books they need to educate our children. Patrons can choose from over 50,000 titles, including a wide selection of ethnic books that address Greek, Italian and other cultures.

I believe there is ample demand in Astoria

for an independent bookstore to coexist with a larger chain. I will continue my work to give Astoria all the resources and advantages of any neighborhood in the city, while at the same time, promoting the businesses that are already flourishing here.

Sincerely,

Councilman Peter F. Vallone Jr.
22nd Council District

Astoria

Parking Calendar Has Error

To The Editor:

Many of my constituents throughout the 12th Senate District recently requested copies of a free New York City parking calendar that I offer each year and advertise in my December newsletter. Unfortunately, due to a printer's error, some of the information in the 2007 calendar, which has already been mailed out to many constituents, is incorrect.

I am having the calendars reprinted to correct the mistakes, and I urge my constituents to contact my Albany office to request a new calendar. They may call my district office at 1-718-545-9706 and ask to be transferred to extension 7907 in Albany. I deeply regret the inconvenience, and will provide the new calendars as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

George Onorato
State Senator, 12th District

GOP Leaders Lack Vision

To The Editor:

As civic life begins to stir again—the Congress assembles tomorrow [January 4]—voters remain full of anticipation as a new, promising team takes the helm in Albany, already pledged to maintain the momentum on overdue reforms.

Yet it is dispiriting to read in recent suc-

cessive dispatches (December 21, 22, 2006) by the trio Danny Hakim, Patrick Healy, and Mike McIntire in the Metro Section of the New York Times that the storied Republican Party of New York State— heir to the successful legacy decades of the '50s, '60s, and '70s—is being managed by political Lilliputians of the narrowest outlook, and rife with the stench of scandal (pathologies amply shared on a bipartisan basis).

Consider the case of state Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno. Under intense inquiry for allegedly pursuing self-interest while ostensibly serving the public domain, he has refused to voluntarily step aside until the ethical cloud over his dealings is dissipated. Instead, he had the temerity to foist as chairman of my NYS Republican organization the perennially politically suspect Nassau County Party Chairman Joseph N. Mondello! The latter, has amassed an impressive string of electoral defeats, and still he advances instead of being unceremoniously dumped! (I am both a former long-term Committeeman and once the Republican-Liberal candidate for Assemblyman.)

A Hudson Valley district state senator, John Bonacic, has been the sole Republican to call for Joe Bruno to step down as majority leader. It will not be writing profiles in courage, but only recording the decent route, were more of his colleagues [to] rush to take the high ground in initiating a change in senate leader. Immediately, the next step must be to strip Joe Mondello of his undeserved promotion.

The decks now clear, our own 9th S.D. candidate, in recent years Deputy Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos, can ascend to become Senate [Majority] Leader! The time would have been signaled for a new politics in the key legislative chamber, the source of much gridlock. A would be Majority Leader Skelos can then reach out to newly installed,

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