



Media Release

Monroe County Democratic Caucus

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For Immediate Release

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Democrats Propose Transparency Reform Measure

Bronson: "Public input is to be embraced, not feared."

Rochester, New York – March 19, 2008. Democrats today announced an innovative proposal intended to increase transparency and opportunities for public input in the county's legislative process.

Legislator Vincent Esposito, D-Irondequoit, said "There is a clear, ongoing need for greater transparency in this County Legislature. That's why I am proud to announce this proposed legislation which will serve to open the doors of government to everyone in our community, regardless of their political beliefs."

Approximately six months ago the Legislature President called a special meeting of the County Legislature in which, less than 90 minutes after receiving meeting notification, a Matter of Urgency – commonly referred to as the F.A.I.R. plan – was approved by the Legislature's Republican Majority.

The proposal announced today, sponsored by Legislator Esposito, will amend the rules of the legislature to require a three-fifths (3/5) vote (or 18 legislators) for legislation to be introduced as a Matter of Urgency (MOU). The MOU has been used to introduce legislation without putting it through the committee process.

"This Republican Majority, through repeated procedural maneuvers, has irresponsibly denied the public their right to a meaningful discussion on legislation which has a tremendous effect on their lives," Legislator Esposito said.

Democratic Leader Harry Bronson, D-Rochester, Brighton and Henrietta, said "The actions taken in this legislature have a significant impact on the everyday lives of those residing in our community. We've seen the stunning impact of the Legislature's decisions with the recently proposed closing of the Washington Irving Elementary School in Gates. Unfortunately, when proposals such as the so-called F.A.I.R. plan are rubber-stamped by the Republican Majority with out an opportunity for meaningful public input, severe unintended consequences of this nature are bound to occur.

"With the passage of this Legislation, future attempts to rush through controversial proposals will be balanced by greater legislative review and opportunities for community involvement. Public input is to be embraced, not feared," Bronson added.

To further support transparent operations, Democrats have introduced a reform measure for the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), which has been rejected by the Legislature President on five separate occasions.

Please find the Matters of Urgency amendment and the FOIL legislation attached.

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