



# Media Release

## Monroe County Democratic Caucus

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### For Immediate Release

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## Democrats Walk Out

### Legislators Reject Partisanship In Public Defender Selection Process

**Rochester, New York – January 17, 2008.** Democrats on the Monroe County Legislature's Public Safety Committee refused to legitimize a process that's driven by partisan politics, walking out in protest of the Majority's decision to stifle public input.

Committee Chair refused to recognize Democratic Legislator Calvin Lee (D-Rochester) who was attempting to debate the Majority's insistence on entering into an executive session.

Democrats pointed to the NYS Open Meetings Law, which provides the legal basis for entering into an executive session when confidential personnel matters are addressed. This evening's special session notice indicated that the process of selecting the next public defender would be addressed and did not specifically encompass confidential personnel matters.

Unfortunately, the Chairman not only refused to debate the propriety of entering into an executive session, he had members of the public removed by police.

Democratic Legislators present at the meeting were pleased with the overwhelming public turnout — which is unheard of for a County Legislature Committee meeting outside of the budget process.

"Out of all the community groups, clergy and interested members of the public, not one person spoke in support of the Majority's actions and only spoke to keep the process that produced the choice of Edward Nowak as Public Defender." Harry Bronson (D-Rochester) said. "This is supposed to be a representative Government; we have an obligation to do what's right for this community. Unfortunately, it's very clear the Majority does not want an inclusive, open selection process."

Democratic Legislators will continue to demand a non-political merit-based Public Defender selection process that is inclusive of community members and fully open to public scrutiny. Bronson said "The Democratic caucus remains willing to have dialogue with the Majority to achieve meaningful results."

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