NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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12:19 p.m.

EXTRAORDINARY SESSION

SENATOR DAVID J. VALESKY, Acting President

ANGELO J. APONTE, Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: The Senate will please come to order.

I ask everyone present to please rise and recite with me the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag.

(Whereupon, the assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.)

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: In the absence of clergy, may we bow our heads in a moment of silence.

(Whereupon, the assemblage respected a moment of silence.)

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: The reading of the Journal.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Monday, November 23, the Senate, in Extraordinary Session, met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Sunday, November 22, was read and approved. On motion, Senate adjourned.

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: Without objection, the Journal stands approved

as read.

Senator Klein.

SENATOR KLEIN: Mr. President, can you first recognize Senator Sampson, then Senator Skelos, for brief statements.

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: Senator Sampson.

SENATOR SAMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Earlier today, my colleagues, we received two bills from the Governor. One bill was about 440 pages. The Governor has met his constitutional obligation and responsibility by handing down the deficit reduction proposal. The Legislature can now openly consider it.

While we have concerns, and we too have real concerns with these proposals, we are committed in a bipartisan fashion to close the budget gap. And make no bones about it, we understand what our responsibilities are and we're going to comply with our responsibilities. New York needs us to act immediately and act now, which we will do.

It's important for everyone to understand that this isn't about a Democratic job or a Republican job or Democratic cuts or Republican cuts. It's instead about bipartisanships, understanding the importance of us working collectively together to cut what needs to be cut.

I believe that we can get this done and we will get this done. We will reach a fiscally balanced budget. And we understand the concerns, and we understand the issue with respect to our bond ratings.

But at the same time, when we're talking about midyear school cuts, we're talking about cuts to these institutions which have a tremendous impact economically in our communities, but most of all having school districts making decisions during this period of time as to whether or not they can survive and pass those cuts along to our constituencies with respect to property taxes.

Right now we're going to review what the Governor has sent to us. We're going to continue to work together. And I want to

commend my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, Leader Skelos. We're working together because we understand our fiscal responsibilities. And make no bones about it, we truly understand that. People don't think we understand that, but we truly understand that.

But at the same time, when we have people walking around the Capitol congratulating us, when they have children who are autistic who these cuts will severely damage some of the services that they have, they ask us do we have a heart.

So, my colleagues, I want to just thank you very much for your commitment. We're going to get this done. We understand our fiscal responsibilities. And we're not going to walk away without dealing with what the Governor has sent to us. But once again, it's 440 pages. We need an opportunity to look at this and make sure we can come to a resolution that is fiscally responsible, not only for the Governor but for everybody in the State of New York.

At this point in time I'd like if you'd recognize Leader Skelos.

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: Thank you, Senator Sampson.

Senator Skelos.

SENATOR SKELOS: Thank you, Mr. President.

Let me just start off by saying that Conference Chairman Sampson and myself, our individual staffs have been meeting on a regular basis in order to come up with a deficit reduction plan that has real cuts in spending in terms of what the people of the State of New York are demanding from us.

But the fact is that he has extended every courtesy to us as the Republican conference as we work our way through this process. So, John, I thank you, I thank you for that.

We may have disagreements, but the bottom line is we all understand that we have to reach a deficit reduction plan within the next several days. It's incumbent upon us, and that's our challenge.

Just over three weeks ago, Governor Paterson had us come into the Assembly chamber to let us know how serious the deficit is. Quite honestly, it was a nice day, but we all know how serious the deficit is in New York State.

That day, I suggested that the Governor send us a deficit reduction bill -- not a press release, not a sketchy plan, but an actual bill. And he did not do that, despite the fact that we are asked to come back in in special session.

Today he is finally, after approximately three weeks, sending us a bill.

While we've waited to take action on a bill, our conference, our Republican conference, proposed a plan that works off a number of the Governor's proposals to address the $3.2 billion deficit.

In fact, our conference did come up with a plan that did exactly that, and the Governor at times indicated that we were the conference that was suggesting spending cuts.

And right now the discussions that

we've had between Senator Sampson, myself, individual members, we are at an agreement of approximately $2.8 billion in savings that we can agree to concerning closing the remaining deficit.

Of that, approximately $1.6 billion is reoccurring; over $1.2 billion in actual spending cuts. And I believe it's our challenge in the next couple of days to work together in a nonpolitical way.

And John and I have had this discussion that battle will come as we approach 2010. But right now, our responsibility is to get a deficit reduction plan done and to restore the integrity, quite frankly, of this chamber. And we will get it done.

We will work very diligently in the next couple of days to bring up a deficit reduction plan that we believe can reach over $3 billion and satisfy the demand and the wishes of the people of this great state.

So our work is cut out for us. I'm glad that the Governor finally sent us a

deficit reduction bill. We are going through it. But certain understandings have to be there.

Number one, our conference will not support any increase in taxes and fees as we work through this process. And we will not support, as Leader Sampson has indicated, any midyear cuts in aid to education. We will not do that. And also we will look very carefully in terms of the Governor's proposals concerning healthcare.

We're almost there. We hope that the Governor cooperates with the Legislature. This is not about political numbers. This is not about hysterics. This is about getting something done and getting a result.

And we look forward to working very closely with the Speaker in terms of our legislative responsibilities to get a bill done two ways, and then impress upon the Governor that this is what should be done and it's good for the people of the State of New York.

So our work, as I said, is cut out

for us. I wish everybody in this chamber a happy Thanksgiving. To all of our good staff people around here, our phones are available, and enjoy Thanksgiving Day for a few hours, but then we'll all be working diligently to make sure that a bill is introduced and ready to go on Monday.

So again, Leader Sampson, thank you very much.

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: Thank you, Senator Skelos.

Senator Klein.

SENATOR KLEIN: Mr. President, at this time can we please stand at ease.

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: The Senate will stand at ease.

(Whereupon, the Senate stood at ease at 12:29 p.m.)

(Whereupon, the Senate reconvened at 3:02 p.m.)

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: Senator Klein.

SENATOR KLEIN: Mr. President, is there any further business at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: There is no further business.

SENATOR KLEIN: Mr. President, I ask that we adjourn at the call of the Temporary President, intervening days to be legislative days.

Just in the way of keeping our calendar, we do expect to be back on Monday.

In the meantime, a happy Thanksgiving to all.

ACTING PRESIDENT VALESKY: On motion, the Senate stands adjourned until the call of the Temporary President of the Senate, intervening days being legislative days.

Happy Thanksgiving.

(Whereupon, at 3:03 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)