NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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1:10 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR KATHLEEN C. HOCHUL, President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

THE PRESIDENT: The Senate will come to order.

I ask everyone present to please rise and join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Our invocation today will be given by the Reverend Erwin Trollinger, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in White Plains, New York.

REVEREND TROLLINGER: May we bow our heads.

Gracious Father, we thank You for this time and this event that You have called us into. We've come to this moment in humble reverence. We acknowledge Your will, Your plan and Your potential that you have placed in every elected and appointed official in this place.

Today, Father, fifty years ago You orchestrated the swearing-in of the first African-American woman into the United States House of Representatives. And we are here now

in this chamber to witness your orchestration of the first African-American woman to become the Majority Leader of the New York State Senate. For this we say thank You, for allowing us to witness this moment, this time and this moment of history that You have shown up and shown out.

Bless now this woman, this mother, this Senator, and now this Majority Leader. Grant her the wisdom that she will ask You for, grant her the knowledge that she will seek You for, grant her the understanding that she will pray for.

I pray also, Father, for every elected official in this Senate, that You may guide them to help New York State to be a good place.

I also pray for our Governor and his cabinet.

And lastly, Father, I pray that You will allow our Majority Leader, our Governor, and our State Assembly that they will be that three-strand cord that cannot be easily broken.

I ask you, Father, to grant this prayer based upon the Africans that were captured, based upon the survivors of the

Middle Passage, based upon the humanity that was enslaved, based upon the sharecroppers, based upon the women's suffrage movement, based upon those who engage in civil rights, based upon the immigrants of all generations that are here with us now, based upon our senior citizens and our children.

Grant this prayer in the words that I have spoken with the motto of "Excelsior": Upward, reaching onward and higher goals.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Reverend.

The chair now hands down a message from the State Board of Elections, being the duly official certification of the members of the Senate, and directs the same be filed. So handed down and so ordered.

I'd also like to ask if there are any Senators present who have not taken their oaths of office, to please rise at this time.

(No response.)

THE PRESIDENT: Seeing none, the Secretary will call the roll to ascertain that a quorum exists.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Addabbo.
SENATOR ADDABBO: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Akshar.
SENATOR AKSHAR: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Amedore.
SENATOR AMEDORE: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Antonacci.
SENATOR ANTONACCI: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Bailey.
SENATOR BAILEY: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Benjamin.
SENATOR BENJAMIN: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Biaggi.
SENATOR BIAGGI: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Boyle.
SENATOR BOYLE: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Breslin.
SENATOR BRESLIN: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Brooks.
SENATOR BROOKS: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Carlucci.
SENATOR CARLUCCI: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Comrie.
SENATOR COMRIE: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Felder.

SENATOR FELDER: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Flanagan, excused.
Senator Funke.
SENATOR FUNKE: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Gallivan.
SENATOR GALLIVAN: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Gaughran.
SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Gianaris.
SENATOR GIANARIS: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Griffo.
SENATOR GRIFFO: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Gounardes.
SENATOR GOUNARDES: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Harckham.
SENATOR HARCKHAM: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Helming.
SENATOR HELMING: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Hoylman.
SENATOR HOYLMAN: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Jackson.
SENATOR JACKSON: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Jacobs, excused.

Senator Jordan.
SENATOR JORDAN: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Kaminsky.
SENATOR KAMINSKY: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Kaplan.
SENATOR KAPLAN: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Kavanagh, excused.
Senator Kennedy.
SENATOR KENNEDY: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Krueger.
SENATOR KRUEGER: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Lanza.
SENATOR LANZA: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator LaValle.
SENATOR LaVALLE: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Little.
SENATOR LITTLE: Present.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Liu.
SENATOR LIU: Here.
THE SECRETARY: Senator Martinez.
SENATOR MARTINEZ: Here.
THE PRESIDENT: A quorum is present.
In keeping with the tradition of

this chamber, it's my honor, as the President of the New York State Senate, to welcome you to this 2019 session.

And I'd first of all like to acknowledge the presence of the distinguished guests we have here. We have our New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli in our midst.

Thank you for joining us, Comptroller.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: And on this very special occasion we have the senior women of the Cuomo administration, as well as the first-ever female Secretary to the Governor, Melissa DeRosa.

Thank you for joining us here today.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Each January for the past number of years, I've stood from this unique perch and looked out and seen a chamber filled with individuals with a passion for public service. And I also pay tribute to those who sat in these seats in the past. And while they may no longer answer the roll call, they should be proud of the difference that they made for their constituents as they held the honorable title

"New York State Senator."

To those who are returning, I hope you never lose that sense of awe that every one of us felt upon entering these majestic chambers.

And so to our returning veteran Senators -- and indeed, it's amazing to see how people have risen in seniority -- welcome back. As I visit all 62 counties every year, it's incredible to witness the pride that each one of you have in the districts you're proud to represent, and the people you represent.

We gather here fully embracing the weighty responsibilities entrusted to us by the electorate. And whether you were drawn to public service because there was a wrong you wanted to right or an injustice you wanted to correct or a challenge that your community was facing or you simply had the desire to leave the world a better place, to all of you, on behalf of Governor Cuomo and myself, I say thank you for your service and look forward to serving with you in a collaborative fashion.

But to the new class of 17 Senators, I look out and I see something I've been waiting for far too long, and that's a lot of women. A

lot.

(Cheers; sustained applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Twenty, in fact -- up from 13 since we last gathered -- nearly one out of three.

And this body is also more ethnically, racially, religiously and culturally diverse than at any time in the 242-year history of the State of New York.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: And that in itself gives each of us such a tremendous sense of pride.

But I know each of us is fully aware that it's more important than just making history, it's that we make a difference. And that's why you travel here, leaving spouses and families, and moms and dads saying goodbye to children who aren't quite sure why mom and dad are missing some important milestone, and in some cases leaving newborns. I know there's a lot of newborn babies among us. Senator Benjamin, Senator Thomas, and the appropriately excused Senator Jacobs, who I think has a one-day-old baby.

So you're missing family milestones, important parts of lives. So to your families, to all the families gathered here today, I thank you and recognize the sacrifice that you also make to allow your loved one to come here and to pose ideas and debate them and to pass legislation, legislation that shows the rest of the nation that indeed our great State of New York can lead in enhancing the lives of others and promoting progressive values.

And while I know no one ran for office to break down barriers, on this day we welcome the very first Indian American, the first Iranian American, the first Taiwanese American and the first Muslim to these chambers. I think those breakthroughs deserve a round of applause as well.

(Enthusiastic applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: And in a matter of minutes, listen closely: We're going to hear the shattering of this ceiling, the last great frontier, as we break down that ceiling and this body elects the most capable, the most battle-tested, and the most qualified person to be its leader. Who, by the way, happens to be a

woman and a woman of color. Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, we're here to honor you as well.

(Cheers; extended standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Leader Cousins, I know that you inspire me personally, and all the women in this room. But more than that, you've proven to every little girl in this state, brown, black or white, that there are no more barriers to hold them back because they can now look to our state leadership for inspiration, that the leader of the Senate is a woman, that two out of four of the statewide elected officials, the Attorney General and the Lieutenant Governor, are women.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: And down the hall, the majority leader of the New York State Assembly is a woman.

So a new day has dawned in our Capitol, and each and every one of you will remember that you were here when history was made.

And may we never forget why we gathered on this frigid January day in the Capitol of the greatest state in the nation, and

know that when we break on hopefully a warm, sunny day in June and we gavel out the 242nd session, that the people of New York will know that each and every one of you honored your sacred oath of office that you took here today, serving the people of New York to the very best of your abilities.

Congratulations.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: I'd also like to recognize and applaud the presence of our great Assembly Speaker. Carl Heastie is here as well.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris, the floor is yours.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Good afternoon and thank you, Madam President.

I believe there is a resolution at the desk, Resolution Number 1, and I ask that it be read and move for its immediate adoption.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Gianaris, providing for the election of Andrea Stewart-Cousins as Temporary President

of the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris, you may speak on the resolution.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

And thank you to everyone who has chosen to be with us on this historic day, and congratulations to all my colleagues who are with us in the chamber again.

In almost two and a half centuries, the chambers housing New York's State Legislature have seen a lot. They have seen coups, they have seen ejected members, they have seen dueling sessions on this very floor. They have seen coleaders, they have seen coalition leaders. They have seen indicted leaders. Yet in 241 years, the one thing neither house of our state government has ever seen is a female leader -- until today.

(Applause.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: Our historical embarrassment ends today with the election of Andrea Stewart-Cousins as our Majority Leader. And what a great leader she will be.

When we act properly, this body

should select as leader the Senator among us who represents the best of us, and Andrea Stewart-Cousins is that person. Not just because she possesses two X chromosomes, but because she is uniquely suited to lead at this moment in history, a moment when our nation is in crisis and the best hope for America is found in our state governments.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins understands what responsible leadership requires of us because her judgment and sober perspective are second to none. Indeed, I have never known anyone better at knowing when to temper emotions and when to fuel them, at knowing when to react angrily to injustice and when to forgive errors in judgment, at knowing when to put carrots on the plate and when to break out the stick.

Hers is a measured judgment born of a lifetime of experience destined for this day. Raised in New York City public housing, but also decades as a resident of one of our great suburbs. Someone who has felt discrimination up close and personal, and who authored Westchester's first human rights laws. Now representing a district that is simultaneously

home to the poorest and the wealthiest of our state and everything in between.

This experience provides her the knowledge of what all New Yorkers require: A government that is more responsive and accountable to the needs of its residents; increased access to healthcare; better education for our children; more affordability for our tenants and our homeowners alike; and, above all else, the integrity to restore the public's faith in our state government.

Years of public service clearly establish Andrea Stewart-Cousins' high ethical barometer and steady moral compass, traits that are more important today than they've ever been. I promise you this. Our selection of Andrea Stewart-Cousins as Majority Leader will be one that we can be proud of and will never regret.

My colleagues, after 241 long years, it is time to turn the page in this chamber and begin a new chapter. It is time for the proverbial "three men in the room" to say goodbye to everything they thought they knew about how government should be run.

(Laughter; applause.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: The winds of change are sweeping a fabulous scarf into your room, and things will never be the same.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: It is finally time for a woman's touch in the highest position in this body. My colleagues, it is time for Andrea Stewart-Cousins to serve as Majority Leader.

Thank you.

(Cheers; applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the resolution offered by Senator Gianaris. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

THE PRESIDENT: Opposed?

(Response of "Nay.")

THE PRESIDENT: The ayes have it. The resolution is adopted.

(Cheers; sustained standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: At this time Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins will come forward and be sworn in as Temporary President of the Senate by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, and joined

by her family.

CHIEF JUDGE DiFIORE: Senator, please place your left hand on the Bible and raise your right hand and repeat after me: "I do solemnly swear" --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I do solemnly swear --

CHIEF JUDGE DiFIORE: -- "to support and uphold the Constitution of the United States" --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- to support and uphold the Constitution of the United States --

CHIEF JUDGE DiFIORE: -- "to support and uphold the Constitution of the State of New York" --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- to support and uphold the Constitution of the State of New York --

CHIEF JUDGE DiFIORE: -- "and to faithfully discharge my duties as Temporary President and Majority Leader of the New York State Senate" --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- and to faithfully execute my duties as

Temporary President and Majority Leader of the New York State Senate --

CHIEF JUDGE DiFIORE: -- "to the best of my ability" --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- to the best of my ability --

CHIEF JUDGE DiFIORE: -- "so help me God."

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- so help me God.

(Tumultuous cheering; extended standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Congratulations -- and I've been waiting to say these words -- Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. Congratulations.

(Cheers; applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, can you please recognize Leader Stewart-Cousins for opening session remarks.

THE PRESIDENT: Indeed, I'm happy to.

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, please come forward and deliver

your opening remarks.

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you. Thank you.

(Applause; laughter.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: (Ascending to dais.) Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Thank you. This is incredible.

And first and foremost, I want to thank God. Because frankly I consider myself being here amazing grace. Amazing grace.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And I am eternally humbled and grateful for the opportunity.

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, my friend Kathy Hochul. It has just been such a pleasure to work with you over the years, and I know we will continue to work to do great things for New York. Thank you.

I also, as I was thanking our Reverend Trollinger, thank you for that beautiful prayer. Reverend Trollinger is somebody who is a spiritual mentor for everyone in Westchester. Thank you so much for being here.

(Cheers, applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I want to thank my deputy, Senator Gianaris, for your kind words and certainly for all the work you've done on behalf of our conference. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And Senator Griffo, I know this year is going to be a good one for all of us, and I look forward to working with you to make sure that New Yorkers are served in the very best way. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I'm also, obviously, looking forward to a great partnership with the Governor, Governor Cuomo. We've had a wild ride --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- but I'm sure we will work together on our shared agenda for New York.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And of course I know my comptroller friend -- we always, you know, point out our Comptroller because, as I say, he's the best comptroller in the whole

country. And he also signs the checks.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: But Tom, thank you so much for all that you've done. And again, I'm looking forward to working closely with you.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And of course my partner. (To Speaker Heastie.) I know you finished up your session so that you could be here.

SPEAKER HEASTIE: (Inaudible.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Well, I'm really, really so happy that, again, we will have the kind of partnership we have. I'm looking so forward to it. Thank you so much for your leadership.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: So I'm in awe. I stand here in awe of everything that has happened.

First of all, my conference: 39 members strong. Wow. Wow.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We have

15 new members. Wow.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We have 14 women in our conference. Wow.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And in this chamber, 20 women. Wow.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: You know, when you think about it, not that long ago women weren't even allowed to walk on the floor of these chambers.

So just because this is a visual we have not seen, can all the women please stand? Please stand. Please stand.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: It's been amazing. Amazing.

So anyway, as I said, I have 15 new members. And because I get a chance to introduce all of my new members, I want you to just bear with me. Because these people are going to change New York, so you need to know who they are.

So let me start with Alessandra

Biaggi.

(Cheering; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: She's already earned a reputation as a fierce advocate for women's rights, fighting against sexual harassment. I look forward to her serving as the Senate's Ethics Committee chair and working to clean up Albany and rebuild the voters' trust.

Next I want you to meet Jim Gaughran. Jim?

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Jim has decades of experience in the public sector in public service and will be vital as the chair of the Committee on Local Government.

Next I want you to meet Andrew Gounardes.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Andrew's got a life, too, of public service, and his commitment to providing a stronger voice for the residents of Brooklyn is outstanding.

Thank you, Andrew.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And I

want to you to meet Pete Harckham.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Pete Harckham's experience in public office is going to be of great value, and we look forward to working with him, I especially as a fellow Westchester County representative.

So thank you, Pete.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I'm honored to welcome the first -- and we talked about, the Lieutenant Governor talked about a lot of firsts, and we've got a lot of firsts. And so I'm welcoming the first Muslim State Senator, Robert Jackson.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Robert is a powerful advocate for education fairness.

And Robert, we're lucky to have you in the Senate.

Join me in welcoming Senator Anna Kaplan.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Another first: The first Iranian American elected to the

State Senate. Anna will continue her service to Nassau County families and will work tirelessly to help grow Long Island and the New York economy.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Let us welcome -- we're not done yet with our firsts. Let us welcome Senator John Liu, the first Chinese American.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: John Liu has a depth of knowledge and experience that will benefit all of his constituents and all New Yorkers.

Next, another first: Senator Monica Martinez.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: The first Salvadoran Senator. Dedicated her life to public service, education, and a wonderful addition to this body. And I know she'll fight hard for Long Island families.

Looking forward to working with Senator Rachel May. Rachel. Rachel is chairing the Committee on Aging, and she will work

diligently to serve our seniors and represent upstate families and communities.

Thank you, Rachel.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Pleased to introduce you to Jen Metzger. Jen Metzger from the Hudson Valley, she's chair of the Senate Agricultural Committee, and she'll help our farmers and agribusinesses grow and prosper while also protecting the environment and natural resources.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Another first, Zellnor Myrie.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: First Costa Rican Senator. He understands affordable housing, a crisis that's facing many New Yorkers. And as the Election Committee chair, he'll move our state forward to empower voters and cut red tape. Zellnor Myrie.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Next, I want you to meet Jessica Ramos.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Jessica has strong roots in her community, and I know that her leadership, especially as Labor chair, will be crucial for our progress and success. Jessica Ramos.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I want you to meet Senator Julia Salazar.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Julia's activism in civil rights and immigration will be important as we address many crucial issues facing New Yorkers. She'll be a fierce advocate for her district and for all of us.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Now, both Senator Ramos and Senator Salazar are firsts as well: The first Colombian Senators in the State Senate.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Senator James Skoufis.

(Laughter; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Senator Skoufis is willing and eager -- and really

willing and eager --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- to stand up and fight powerful interests and corrupt politics in Albany. He's already proven to be a great representative in the Hudson Valley when he was in the Assembly, and we're looking forward to him delivering real results for his community.

Thank you, Senator Skoufis.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And last but not least, another history-maker, the first Indian American Senator, Senator Kevin Thomas.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Senator Thomas has made history joining his colleagues in a diverse Senate Democratic majority. His experience fighting for the less fortunate and ensuring fairness and opportunities will make him a truly exceptional Senator for Long Island and all of New York State.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: So there you have all the new members.

And, you know, we're all sort of

lavishing praise on all our new members, but I want to thank, obviously, the members who have been through a lot. And thank you all for being strong and steadfast and committed and for really being the critical glue that made this moment possible. Thank you all so very much. What an honor to serve as your leader.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And I know that Senator Griffo will get a a chance to more appropriately introduce the new members, but I do want to welcome Daphne Jordan --

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- and -- Daphne, stand up -- and Bob Antonacci. Hi, Bob.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Welcome.

Okay. So now I'll just talk a little bit about this day. And, you know, as I reflect on what this day means, I think of opportunities and barriers. I think of all the giants whose names we know -- Sojourner, Harriet, Susan, Eleanor, just to name a few, Shirley -- and the sacrifices that they made to make this moment possible.

And I also think about the giants in my life. You've heard, many of you before, about my parents, Beryl and Bob. My father was a World War II hero who served in a segregated army. He won medals for his country and for his valor and then came back home and was denied many things, even the GI bill, because of the color of his skin.

I think of my mother, a woman who, because of her gender and her race, was not given a fair shot. She always wanted to be a lawyer, but that opportunity, for so many reasons, was denied her. She typed a hundred words a minute but was denied even an opportunity to work in a corporation or private business. So she entered the workforce through civil service and made her mark in New York City government.

I think of my brother, Bobby, a Vietnam War veteran who's accomplished so many things in his life, always supporting, the bedrock of the family.

I think of my late husband, Tom, and all of his sacrifices that he made so that I could pursue opportunities and dreams. I wish he were here with me today to see all that I've

accomplished.

But I have our children, Kevin and Steven and Candice, and their beautiful families, my grandchildren. And we all know that our families sacrifice so much for us to do this. So I thank you for having been patient and loving, and I am so very grateful that you are here with me in this special moment. And I love you, love you very much. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Since our nation's founding, those chosen by the people to lead our government have faced the choice of traveling down two paths, the path of putting up barriers or the path of creating opportunities.

We know all too well which path some of today's leaders have chosen. We need only to look at Washington, where the administration has embraced the path of putting up barriers to the extreme. It has literally shut down the federal government to build a wall.

But not all barriers are that obvious. Sometimes, even in seemingly progressive places like New York, barriers still exist. We are going to break down some more

barriers.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We are going to tell the rest of the country that New York is about opportunities. Not barriers, not walls, not division. Opportunity.

How are we going to tell them? We're going to tell them by making democracy work. We're going to implement early voting, combat voter suppression --

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- make registering to vote easier, allow voting by mail. We're finally going to give New Yorkers an honest, functional, ethical government that they deserve.

We'll restore the public trust by closing the LLC loophole, reforming our campaign finance system, making sure state contracts are fully vetted, and shining a light on how government works.

We're going to continue to build our economy and create new jobs, we're going to stop the exodus from our state, and we're going to make sure all of New York -- upstate, downstate,

urban, suburban, rural -- grows economically.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: While our national government vindictively uses the tax laws to punish our state, we're going to lower our tax burden for middle-class New Yorkers and make the tax cap permanent.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We're going to reduce mandates on local governments. We're going to help our small businesses, including MWBEs, thrive. We're going to make sure that New York laws recognize that women's rights are human rights.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We will pass the Reproductive Health Act. We will pass the Reproductive Health Act --

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- and comprehensive contraceptive care.

I stand here the first woman leader of a legislative house in state history. And if we do this right, I cannot and will not be the last. Cannot and will not. But let me make my

voice clear. We need to deal with the scourge of sexual harassment in the workplace.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We cannot let this moment and movement pass. We will hold hearings, and we will hold all accountable.

In this chamber, we will stand up for our LGBTQ community and pass real protections, including GENDA.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We will stand up for our immigrant brothers and sisters and make sure their rights are respected and protected. This is New York, after all.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We'll make sure our children and every New Yorker has access to quality affordable healthcare. We'll make sure all New York children have access to quality education that they deserve and that all our children have access to quality, affordable higher education.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We are going to pass the DREAM Act.

(Cheers; applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And we are going to name the bill for our former colleague José Peralta, who championed this bill.

(Standing ovation.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We're going to stand up for victims of child sexual abuse and finally pass the Child Victims Act.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We're going to protect tenants and ensure that we provide affordable housing throughout New York.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We're going to reform our criminal justice system. We're going to pass bail reforms, speedy trial, ensure our system treats everyone equally.

We're going to lead the way in keeping our families safe from guns and gun violence. We're going to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals, fix our flawed background check process, pass safe storage legislation, and ban bump stocks.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: We will

have bold investments in our infrastructure, which has been neglected for far too long. That means restoring MTA to an international transit model, improving roads and bridges and tunnels across our state.

And again, we believe in science and understand the dangers of climate change. We're going to work together to protect our environment.

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I could probably stay up here for hours. Colleagues, this is just part of an ambitious agenda, and there's no -- and there's nothing to stop us and so much more we have to accomplish. But we've been sent here to be ambitious, to make New York a beacon of hope and progress for the rest of our country.

And as I said at the beginning, our leaders have always been at crossroads, and as Senators, as New Yorkers, as Americans we could choose the path of putting up barriers or we could choose the path of creating opportunity. By delivering this diverse, talented and historic group of Senators to Albany, the people of our

great state have made it crystal-clear which path they expect us to take.

So I address my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, from every corner of New York. I invite you and all of us to join to create opportunity for every New Yorker, to level the playing field for every child, and to make this state as great as the people who live in it.

Thank you so very much. Let's get to work.

(Extended standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Stewart-Cousins.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

Can you please recognize Senator Griffo for opening remarks.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Griffo.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you, Madam President.

And I want to welcome this great crowd in the chamber today who are here to witness this significant moment and to experience government firsthand.

As you can hear, I am fighting a cold, as some of my colleagues also are probably experiencing. So I know there's a lot of warmth in the chamber. And I can assure you, though, even though my voice sounds a little different, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins told me it's not the outset of puberty.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: So this is a new year, and it is a new beginning and a new opportunity for a new session. We have all the bustle, the energy, the excitement that comes along with it.

And I want to thank every member of this body for their commitment and their willingness to serve. I want to thank all of the families who are here today for being here to be a part of this and to experience this and to be here on such a special day to witness all of this. This is what you call live TV, see, it's just -- let me congratulate the leader.

(Laughter; applause.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: So again, I thank all the members who are here and, again, for their service to this great state.

I also want to welcome all of the new members. As Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins has indicated, they all worked hard. We appreciate their dedication and willingness to serve this great state.

I particularly want to recognize two of our newest members here. I will start with Senator Daphne Jordan, who came from the ranks of the staff, who understands what it means to work long days and extra days and with very little sleep. She has been an exceptional public servant, and I know she will do an extraordinary job representing the Capital District.

Welcome, Senator Jordan.

(Applause.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: From Central New York, a uniquely qualified and very well respected individual who comes with such credentials that we are proud to have him as part of our conference: Senator Bob Antonacci, former local government official, who enjoys an outstanding reputation in Central New York, and I know that will grow across the state.

So Bob, welcome to you and your family today.

(Applause.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: And while there have been changes, our mission as public servants remains the same, starting with and supporting policies that will help hardworking families, middle-class families to succeed and for businesses to prosper and grow.

And as you know, we have chosen Senator John Flanagan to be the leader of the Republican Conference. He has recently acknowledged seeking help to overcome a battle with alcoholism. We applaud his courage in facing down this difficult challenge, and we hope by going public in a most difficult manner that he will also inspire others to seek the help that they need.

We remain united and supportive and look forward to his speedy and healthy return. And I know that's shared by everyone here.

(Applause.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: We also join you in recognizing the historic nature of this day and this very moment. Today marks the election of the first woman, the first African-American woman to lead this chamber.

And I have known Senator Stewart-Cousins for a while; we arrived at the same time. But after reading many of the articles over the last several weeks, I think it's a true chronicle of an extraordinary journey with many challenges -- characterized, though, by courage, by dignity, by class, hard work and perseverance. And that should be an inspiration to and motivation to many others.

So today, Senator Stewart-Cousins, we salute you on this achievement and we look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead. Congratulations.

(Applause.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: There have been a myriad of conversations about what kind of agenda this Legislature and our Governor should support. We in the Senate Republican Conference will advance the most taxpayer-friendly agenda that this state has ever seen. We must give our families the ability to stay and raise their families here in New York rather than being forced to leave our great state in search of lower taxes and greater opportunities.

More than a million people have left

our state since the last census. We don't need a committee to identify the reasons, and it's not the weather. It's high taxes. It's strangulating regulations. It's crippling energy costs. And it's the lack of good-paying jobs.

Let's find real solutions. Let's work together to reverse this decline. And you, me, and all of us collectively working together can make a difference. There's plenty of time to achieve all that we want to do and more, of all the subject matter and issues that we have discussed and have been presented. And while we recognize and realize that everything on the table is important to someone, let's start here and make economic revitalization of New York our top priority.

Whether it's education funding or money for infrastructure, our hope is that this Senate will continue to treat each region of this state equitably. We believe that the property tax should made permanent. Many of you have recently pledged to join us in that effort, and we welcome that.

Let's also continue our efforts in the fight against heroin, opiate addiction, gang

violence and Lyme disease. Senate Republicans have made great progress, with your help and work, on those issues, and we encourage the leadership and this chamber to continue to work together to address them and to make a difference.

And finally, this Legislature should support commonsense reforms to restore accountability, to make government work better, to make government more efficient than ever before. More disclosure, more transparency, an open and honest budget process, which are critically important to each and every New Yorker, and it should be important to each and every one of us.

We stand here before you today in this conference ready to work and ready to serve. Even though Senate Republicans may now make up a numerical minority, our voice has never been as important as it is today. We have much to offer. We have much to contribute on behalf of the millions of New Yorkers that we now serve.

Senator Gianaris, I look forward to working with you. And I know that our Mediterranean ancestry will make that very

passionate --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: -- and we will differ on policy, on politics, on philosophy and procedurally.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GRIFFO: But we will listen to one another, and we will listen to what each side is saying. And we should always respect one another, particularly in this great house.

Let's end with a fitting quote from a Roosevelt. No, not the former four-term Democratic president that Governor Cuomo likes to quote and cite. No surprise, I'm going to quote the other one, President Teddy Roosevelt.

President Roosevelt once said: "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

The people's work is important, and it is so worth doing. And all of us have made that commitment here today. So that is the opportunity that lies before us. Let's seize it and make it ours on this very day and through this entire session.

Thank you all. God bless you.

(Standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Griffo.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

We have several procedural items to take up. First, there is a resolution at the desk calling for the election of the Secretary of the Senate. Will you call that up, please.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, that Alejandra Paulino of Albany, New York, be, and she hereby is, elected Secretary of the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

THE PRESIDENT: Opposed?

(No response.)

THE PRESIDENT: The ayes have it. The resolution is adopted.

(Cheers; applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Ms. Paulino, we ask that you come forward and receive your oath of office while Senator Stewart-Cousins performs the swearing-in.

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Raise your right hand.

"I," state your name --

MS. PAULINO: I, Alejandra Paulino --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- "do solemnly swear" --

MS. PAULINO: -- do solemnly swear --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- "to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America" --

MS. PAULINO: -- to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- "and the Constitution of the State of New York" --

MS. PAULINO: -- and the Constitution of the State of New York --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- "and to faithfully execute my duties as Secretary of

the Senate" --

MS. PAULINO: -- and to faithfully execute my duties as Secretary of the Senate --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- "to the best of my ability" --

MS. PAULINO: -- to the best of my ability --

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: -- "so help me God."

MS. PAULINO: -- so help me God.

(Cheers; standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: I would like to recognize the members of the Assembly who are present. Do you have something to report?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER WEINSTEIN: I'm Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein, chair of Ways and Means, along with our ranker, Assemblyman Will Barclay, and we're here to report that the Assembly has convened, we have organized, we have elected our great speaker, Carl Heastie.

On this exciting, historic day, we are pleased to report we are ready to proceed with the people's business, and we look forward to a very exciting year with the New York State Senate.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Thank you, Assemblymembers. It is so noted in the record.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

There is a resolution at the desk adopting the rules of the Senate. Can we please take that up.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, to adopt the Rules of the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Griffo, why do you rise?

SENATOR GRIFFO: Madam President, I would ask that you call upon Senator Young for a question on the rules resolution before us.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young.

SENATOR YOUNG: Thank you, Madam President.

First of all, I want to say to my

colleagues, welcome back. And to our new colleagues, welcome to the New York State Senate. It is by far one of the most historic bodies in the entire country, and I look forward to working with you.

We are currently operating under house rules. Until these new rules are passed, these are the rules of the house. And so as the newly appointed ranking member on the Ethics Committee, I would invite my new colleague Senator Biaggi to debate some of these new rules.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, as all the Senators who have previously served here know, it is the prerogative of the majority to decide who will answer questions about the rules, and as the floor leader I will take that upon myself.

SENATOR YOUNG: Thank you, Senator Gianaris. I just thought it would be appropriate, because you may remember two years ago the then-chair of the Ethics Committee debated the rules, and you were debating the rules. But it was the chair of the majority

Ethics Committee.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young, I'd just ask that questions go through the chair.

SENATOR YOUNG: Okay. So thank you, Madam President.

When you look at these rules changes, there are several issues that have not changed. But there are two new rules changes that we are particularly concerned about on behalf of the people of New York. And we need to have checks and balances in government to prevent the tyranny of the majority. That's what happens in Congress, that's what happens in the Assembly.

So I have some questions about -- number one, I'll start with Rule X. And part of that amends the staffing allocations. We as a body are responsible for making sure that we have robust debate on critical issues that are important to the people of this state. Your conference, the new majority, has put forward a very, very progressive agenda with many controversial issues that are included in that agenda.

We need to make sure that we are

doing the right thing to have the debate so that all of the issues can be aired, all of the members know exactly what they're voting on, and all of the voters and the citizens of this state know what their government is doing.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young, are you asking --

SENATOR YOUNG: So the first question is --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: -- Senator Gianaris to yield to a question?

SENATOR YOUNG: The first question is --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young, excuse me, are you asking --

SENATOR YOUNG: The first question is --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young --

SENATOR YOUNG: -- the part about amending the staffing allocations.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Excuse me --

SENATOR GRIFFO: Madam President. Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Yes, Senator Griffo, why do you rise?

SENATOR GRIFFO: I think Senator Young had the floor. She had been recognized, she had asked to ask a question. Senator Gianaris decided to take the question as floor leader, which is within his purview and prerogative. Senator Young is beginning to ask the question. So he did agree to respond. So I would ask that you allow Senator Young to ask the question, please.

SENATOR YOUNG: So the first question is --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young, just to clarify, you're asking Senator Gianaris to yield to a question.

SENATOR YOUNG: Right, because he said he was the one handling the debate. Correct, Madam President.

So the first question, through you, Madam President, but to have Senator Gianaris respond, is that what you've done is actually, by the language in this resolution, reduce the potential for the number of staffing that the minority conference has. And that, again, is

something that's undemocratic. Because we are just asking that you treat this conference the same way that we treated you when you were in the minority --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR YOUNG: -- as far as -- as far as the rules go.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Madam President, order in the house, please.

SENATOR YOUNG: So I want to know, Senator Gianaris, why --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Order in the house.

SENATOR YOUNG: -- through you, Madam President, why that staffing allocation formula has been changed.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Are you done?

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Ready? Okay.

The language that -- to which the Senator is referring was only what practice the Republicans had used when they were in the majority, and it was clarified. I know this is the practice, because there came a time when we

were losing members in our conference and the leader was made to go to the majority leader and ask for additional funding. It was not given as a right under the rules.

This rule, as written by the Republican majority -- and the language that we took out was unclear, but used in a very -- in a manner that was doing exactly what this new language is doing. It said "on a per-member basis." It was explained to us by the majority at the time that that meant, if the composition of the conferences change, then the allocations change.

So we have done nothing other than make it clear for all to see what's happening.

SENATOR YOUNG: Through you, Madam President --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young.

SENATOR YOUNG: -- I'd like to respond to Senator Gianaris. Because in our rules we always had a 30 percent floor.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, is Senator Young on the bill at this point?

SENATOR YOUNG: So -- no, but I

want to continue with the questioning.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Young, are you asking -- asking a question of --

SENATOR YOUNG: Sure. Through you, Madam President, I want to continue with the questioning.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Gianaris, do you continue to yield?

SENATOR GIANARIS: I do.

SENATOR YOUNG: The other rule is Rule VIII that we have significant issues with. And particularly it has to do with the committee structure, number one. Because again, the formula on the committees has been changed.

And I am asking this question of you, why was that changed, on behalf of the people of this state. Because as I said, we need to have robust debate, we need to have fairness in the system, the same way that the rules read when you were in the minority. So why was that changed?

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Yes, thank you, Madam President.

The rule that the Senator is referring to provides for the membership of committees. The New York Senate, for as long as I'm aware, but certainly for over a decade, had the largest member-per-committee-assignment ratio in the entire country of any legislative body. And not by a little bit, by a lot.

There was a report several years ago that recommended that that number be reduced because it will allow members to focus more expertise on the committee assignments they have. And by making the changes we're making, the average per-member committee assignments now goes from 7.1 per member to 5.78. We think that is more in line with legislative bodies all around the country. And in fact, even that number may be -- will be on the high end. I'm not sure we've made it under being the -- having the worst ratio in that respect.

But the idea is to allow members to develop an expertise in subject areas that will operate these committees more efficiently.

SENATOR YOUNG: Through you, Madam President.

So, Senator Gianaris, on some of the

committees it's my understanding there would be just one member from the Republican conference. And you said that it's utilizing people's expertise. I would say that our members have a lot of expertise in all of these topic areas.

So why, again, would you treat us unfairly and take away the representation that we have and the responsibility that we have to the constituents in our district and to the state to have more robust representation, proper representation on these committees?

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, allow me to correct my colleague. There are no committees on which the minority only has one appointee. The minimum is two.

The smallest committee memberships are seven members, and those committees break down five-to-two, majority to minority.

SENATOR YOUNG: Thank you, Madam President.

I would say, Senator Gianaris, you're taking away people's voices in the state, something that you said you would not do.

The other question I had has to do with the Ethics and Internal Governance

Committee. And I --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Excuse me, Senator Young. Are you continuing to ask Senator Gianaris to yield?

SENATOR YOUNG: Yes, if he will yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Gianaris, do you yield?

SENATOR GIANARIS: Yes.

SENATOR YOUNG: Senator Gianaris, first of all, I want to applaud the new chairwoman of the committee, because she is focused on ethics. And we all want ethics reform. And in fact, we have done many ethics reforms in this house over the past several years, and I can go through the list in my remarks later on.

But there is a change to make the Ethics and Internal Governance Committee -- to make it go from a select committee to a standing committee. And by doing that, you are actually changing the whole structure of the committee and you are actually taking the Internal Governance Committee from nine to seven members, out of balance, four Democrats, three Republicans.

And again, we need checks and balances in government. This is a time when there's one-party rule in Albany. And it's critically important that we have the proper systems in place.

So why when you two years ago -- and I can read you excerpts of your remarks two years ago. Why two years ago did you insist on having equal representation between Democrats and Republicans and now, now with the new rules that you're putting forward, you are changing that balance and putting it out of balance? And by putting it out of balance, if you're going to change up the committee so it's an investigatory committee, then that opens the door for weaponizing that committee.

So I'd like to know why it's not balanced like the Assembly does, why it's not balanced like what the Congress does. Why is it out of balance, and why are you contradicting all of the points -- and I have the debate right here, extensive debate, all of your remarks. And why have you changed your mind, now that you're in the majority, and you've got unequal representation?

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you.

Let me start off by saying my colleague is right about one thing. We are completely changing the way the Ethics Committee works in this body, because it didn't work under the previous majority. In fact, it was infamous for the fact that it hadn't met in the entire time the Republicans had the majority in their most recent tenure. And when it did the one time last year, it did not go very well, because it didn't take up any actual business other than agreeing to produce a newsletter.

So yes, we are intending to remake the Ethics Committee and make it function so that the people can be well-served by a committee that cares about ethics, unlike what the previous majority had done.

It is going to perform two functions. It is going to perform a legislative function, which means it will have bills referred to it, which never happened -- not once, not ever -- under Republican control. And for that to happen, in order for it to function like every other committee, it needs to have an uneven number of members so we don't have gridlock.

In fact, the ratio of membership is to your benefit. You just pointed out that a seven-member committee in these rules has five majority members and two minority. We decided to try and be fair and make this one four-to-three, so there would be more of a say.

As it relates to investigatory work of this committee, it does require -- as was required in the previous rules -- that at least one member from each conference has to agree for the committee to take action. That is unchanged.

And let me just lay one thing out very clearly for everybody. This is a better deal than we were given. Okay? The previous Ethics Committee was not three-to-three-to-three, it was six coalition majority members to three minority members. You're getting four-to-three. You should be happy and thanking me.

(Laughter; applause from gallery.)

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Order in the chamber.

SENATOR YOUNG: Through you, Madam President, just to remind Senator Gianaris of his previous words --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Excuse me,

Senator Young. Are you continuing to ask Senator Gianaris to yield?

SENATOR YOUNG: Yes. Because I want him to respond.

"The issue of ethics scrutiny in particular should be above politics and applied fairly and equally to all." Page 25, lines 1 through 6.

"Senator Gianaris: Ethics committees have always, for the very reason of taking them out of politics, had an equal representation from the majority and the minority in both houses." Page 25, lines 15 through 19.

And then you said: "And again, when we're dealing with ethics, Madam President, it should be something that we can discuss in transcendency from our political parties, but also in a way that builds consensus on very important issues."

You kept referencing the Assembly rules, where they have equal representation between Democrats and Republicans, in your remarks.

And so I -- I agree with you, we should do more on ethics. I think it's a good

idea. But why not have two committees? Why not have one focused on policy, as Senator Biaggi wants to do, and have the other committee focus on investigations and have equal representation between the two parties? Why can't we do that? That would make more sense, rather than opening the door to possible abuse of power.

And I think, you know, to the new members and to the previous members, one of the greatest responsibilities -- it's profound -- that we have is to not abuse the power that we have as representatives in government. And this opens the door, because this is different than how other ethics committees that investigate things operate.

And I agree with Senator Biaggi, I think we should do more on sexual harassment. I commend you for that. Because we led the way last year as the only house that passed a sexual harassment bill so that it wouldn't be done in the budget, so it wouldn't be done behind closed doors. We wanted to get it out in the open.

But -- so Senator Gianaris, why can't we do both? Why can't we have equality and fairness, as we gave you on the Ethics Committee,

and why can't we have another committee that is set up to investigate any kind of issue that may arise?

SENATOR GIANARIS: Since we're making reference to previous comments that were made on this floor, let me quote Senator Young only about 10 minutes ago, that you would hope that you would be treated the same way we were treated. And that's exactly what you're getting. You're actually getting better treatment.

SENATOR YOUNG: Senator Gianaris --

SENATOR GIANARIS: If it was fair for you, it's fair for us.

SENATOR YOUNG: Senator Gia -- no, through you, Madam President, I just want to say --

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Are you asking him to continue to yield, Senator Young?

SENATOR YOUNG: No, I think on the bill.

Senator Gianaris says that they're writing the rules the same way that they were written two years ago. That is not true. All you have to do is look at the rules and compare them. And we do have investigatory bodies -- the

Legislative Ethics Committee, JCOPE. They have flaws, I agree with that. And so establishing a new Ethics Committee that does investigations is something that makes sense for this house.

But we still need the governance too, and we need to have bills that actually deal with ethics. And we didn't have the two mixed up previously.

I just want to remind our members and educate the new members about some of the reforms we've made to ethics over the many years. Just last year we proposed and passed -- and we did this together -- we proposed and passed comprehensive reforms to combat corruption and ensure greater transparency and accountability in state economic development programs. We didn't accomplish that through this governance committee, through the Ethics Committee. We could accomplish that through the rest of the committee process.

In 2017 we approved a constitutional amendment to strip pensions from corrupt officials. We supported that. We got that done. We approved Senate rules limiting terms of committee chairs and legislative leaders. We did

that. We passed a law requiring comprehensive disclosure of outside income, financial investments, and law clients. These dramatically expanded financial disclosure filings that are now publicly available.

I can go through the entire list; it would take too long. But we have accomplished ethics reform without mixing the purpose of the Ethics Committee.

And we need that check and balance. We need to make sure that power is not out of balance. That's something that, you know, I commend you, Senator Gianaris, you talked about integrity. I commend you, Senator Stewart-Cousins, Leader Stewart-Cousins, for what you said. You want to make democracy work. If we want to make democracy work, we have to have a fair and balanced system and not have a system that has the potential for abuse, for political attacks, and for corruption.

And there's a saying that goes: Remember, power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. And this is something that needs to be changed. I would ask my colleagues on the other side to reconsider this.

I would ask you to establish two committees, two committees, one to be focused on legislation that deals with ethics reform -- I wholeheartedly, we wholeheartedly embrace that concept -- and have another on governance. But do not mix the two, because it's a recipe, I believe, for violating the rights of the people of this state to have everyone's voices heard.

So thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: Yes, Madam President. Thank you. I would ask if Senator Gianaris would take another question.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Gianaris, do you yield?

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, I've been waiting eight years to yield to questions. This is great for me, so --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: -- absolutely.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The Senator yields.

SENATOR SEWARD: Yes. Through you, Madam President, I was listening very intently to

the discussion between Senator Young and Senator Gianaris, and I just rise to ask for some clarification in terms of Section 8, Rule IX, having to do with staffing allocations.

The language, as I read it, implies that the Minority allocation could in fact dip below 30 percent of the overall allocation. Is that the intent of the Majority in these new rules?

SENATOR GIANARIS: And if I could ask for a clarification. The suggestion is if the composition of the relative numbers of conference changes, is that what you're asking?

SENATOR SEWARD: Yes. What I'm asking is there's reference to that the central staff of the Minority shall not be less than 30 percent. But there's also language about a shift in terms of the numbers, in terms of the membership of each conference.

And my question is, are you intending to allocate central staff monies based on the numbers, or is 30 percent the target number?

SENATOR GIANARIS: It is the intention of this language to continue the

practice that was in place under the previous majority.

It's my understanding that when the conference representation changed, there was a discussion between the leaders to maintain the allotments where they were, that it was not the position of the majority that by operation of rule that that percentage should continue. And therefore I think that would be something that we would intend to continue as past practice.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: Madam President, just as a follow-up.

So just to be clear, are we at the 30 percent number or not?

SENATOR GIANARIS: Yes, you are.

SENATOR SEWARD: And will we remain at the 30 percent number?

SENATOR GIANARIS: (Reading.) The funding for the Minority conference shall not be less than 30 percent and shall increase or decrease to reflect any changes in the membership of either conference.

SENATOR SEWARD: Madam President,

so we could dip below 30 percent?

SENATOR GIANARIS: I don't have an answer to that question.

SENATOR SEWARD: Okay. Well, on the bill, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: I would just like to reiterate some of the points that have been raised by Senator Young.

In order to make democracy work, and which is certainly something on both sides of the aisle we can agree on, I think we need to have robust debate, free flow of information here on the floor. And that of course requires staffing, appropriate and proper staffing.

So we would very much say that we should be at the 30 percent as a minimum. That's our position. And I -- I'm not -- I don't feel we're getting a straight answer on that point, whether or not we're going to dip below 30 percent. We believe that should be the floor. And that will base my vote on these rule changes unless I get a firm commitment on the 30 percent.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Seeing no

one else who wishes --

SENATOR TEDISCO: Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Tedisco.

SENATOR TEDISCO: On the rules change.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator Tedisco, why do you rise?

SENATOR TEDISCO: On the rules change. I'd like to speak.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: You want to speak on the resolution?

SENATOR TEDISCO: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Senator, go ahead.

SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you.

As most of you probably know here, it's not too difficult of a shift for me to go from the majority on the other side of the building to the minority, because I spent 17 terms, 34 years, in the minority, part of that as minority leader in the New York State Assembly.

My district in the New York State Assembly was 15 minutes from one end of it to the

other end of it. Had some diversity in it. My new Senate district is 4,000 square miles. It's two and a half hours up to Old Forge, two and a half hours back down. It's diverse, it's rural, it's suburban, it has a variety of concerns. But collectively I think they come together in two areas that they continue to ask me to move forward and to discuss with you and my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, and it has been mentioned by our new Majority Leader.

They want common sense in government, and they want to deal with the ethics issue because they know we can't go forward if we're not doing what's right in terms of taking an oath of office and living up to it.

In terms of common sense, and in terms of doing what's right ethically, this misses the point. They're very concerned about the fact that the inauguration speech, and the things I've heard in the speeches here today, and what the majority has been talking about, if you listen very carefully about an upstate agenda, you'll hear some crickets chirping. Nothing about jobs, nothing about small business opportunities, nothing about bringing up

cellphone usage or broadband to an area in my district or upper levels of New York State. Amazon is great, $3 billion to bring them in, but small businesses need broadband also. We don't have that in large parts of our district.

When I served in the New York State Assembly, if you want to talk about extremism -- and this is I think the beginnings of the continuation, doubling down on the extremism I've seen over the last 10 years from your side of the aisle. Extremism is doing the opposite of what your colleagues are doing in the New York State Assembly. We said hello to Mr. Heastie today, you honored him, you saluted him. In the New York State Assembly, it's an equal number of both sides of the aisle on the Ethics Committee.

I can understand creating a committee to deal with legislation as it relates to ethics. I think that's a fine idea. But when you're talking about nonpartisanism and working together, the Senate's really going in a better direction for you than they have in the past. They have an equal number of Democrats and an equal number of Republicans in their Ethics Committee.

I suggest you follow their lead on that, because the public is looking for nonpartisanship. They don't want you to protect your members potentially if something goes wrong with an ethics issue. And I'm not saying you will do that, but sometimes it's the appearance that has the worst impact on what our constituents think of those out here.

And God only knows we have to gain, and it was mentioned, their support out here. We have to show them we're going to do something about ethics. Maybe we have to do that database of deals, let the Comptroller start looking at different things, get an outside budget committee.

But in this case you're sending a very bad message. You're sending a message that potentially if ethics go wrong on your side of the aisle -- not with that committee to deal with legislation, with that committee to specifically deal with members from your side and our side and make recommendations -- it's far different from what the Assembly has done and is doing, and that is an equal number so we don't see a partisanship in those decisions.

And I think you're going to find the public, when they come to realize and the media covers it and says, Well, the Assembly is allowing both sides to have the same numbers, make a discussion and make a nonpartisan decision when those members come before them, but the Senate has decided to change that, they want to eliminate that and maybe have control of ethics decisions -- it strikes of cronyism, and I don't think that's the direction you want to go. It's extreme, and it's doubling down on extremism from what I've seen in the past.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Seeing no other Senator that wishes to be heard, Senator Gianaris to close.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

I want to just clarify a couple of things. Because I have the good fortune of sitting next to the leader in this chamber, I can clarify further for Senator Seward his question.

It is not expected that the allocation will ever dip below 30 percent. But as was past practice, that is not something that

is by operation of rule. That will be a discussion between the leaders if that ever comes to pass.

As for the Ethics Committee and the issues there, as hard as it is to believe, there was some defense of the ethics record in this body a few moments ago. And if the Minority wants to spend their time defending the record of the Senate on ethics over the last 10 years, they should have at it. I will be happy to give it as much time on the floor of the Senate as they would like to do that, because I think most objective observers realize that it was an embarrassment at the time.

Now let's talk about the composition of the committee. There's two ways to look at this. We had rules last year that the current minority wrote and approved. And so if you want -- and under no way of looking at those rules was there an equal number of both conferences. If you want to look at it coalition versus minority, it was six to three in favor of the coalition government. If you want to look at it Democrat versus Republican, it was six to three, Democrat versus Republican. If you want

to do that, I'll add two more members to the rules for the Democrats and then we'll mimic the rules exactly as you had them.

I don't think that's what you want. So we tried to be fairer and create a makeup that was four-to-three. The protection we got in the rules after negotiation was that any investigative action would require the assent of at least one committee member from each conference. That remains. So the committee cannot be weaponized unless one of your colleagues agrees to do it.

That's the same protection we had last year, and we had to fight to get that protection. This was in the rules as we drafted them.

So let's be clear. This Ethics Committee is going to do something never before done in this body. It's going to actually move legislation. It's going to consider legislation. It's going to take a hard look at what we need to do to improve the ethics of this body, which is something that I can tell you the people of this state have been asking for for a long, long time. And it is going to be empowered

to actually look at malfeasance. And it's going to do so in a bipartisan manner, because it does require a member from each conference to participate in that.

That is a better deal than we got by far, and no amount of misrepresenting the past is going to change that.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Opposed?

(Response of "Nay.")

SENATOR GRIFFO: Show of hands requested.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: All those in favor signify by raising your hands now.

(A show of hands in the chamber.)

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 39.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The resolution is adopted.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, there's a resolution at the desk pertaining to the appointment of the Sergeant-at-Arms. Would you please call that up?

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, that Benjamin M. Sturges III be, and he hereby is, elected Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: Opposed?

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT MAYER: The resolution is adopted.

For the record, Benjamin Sturges III has been elected Sergeant-at-Arms for the years 2019-2020. It is my honor to present to you the Sergeant-at-Arms.

(Standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President. There is another resolution at the desk, to appoint Catherine Kirkland as the Senate Stenographer. Could you please take that up.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, that Catherine Kirkland be, and she hereby is, elected the Official Stenographer of the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

THE PRESIDENT: Those opposed?

(No response.)

THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is adopted.

For the record, Catherine Kirkland has been elected Official Stenographer of the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

Congratulations. It is my honor to present the Official Stenographer of the Senate.

(Standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

There's yet another resolution at the desk setting forth the hours of the Senate for 2019-2020. Can we please take that up.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, providing for the hours of meeting by the Senate for the years 2019-2020.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

THE PRESIDENT: Opposed?

(No response.)

THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is adopted.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, would you please take up the resolution appointing a committee of two to inform the

Governor.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, directing the Temporary President to appoint a committee of two to inform the Governor that the Senate is organized and ready to proceed with business.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

THE PRESIDENT: Opposed?

(No response.)

THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is adopted.

Senators Martinez and Antonacci are hereby appointed to inform the Governor that the Senate is ready to proceed.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you.

Madam President, there's a resolution concerning the committee of two to inform the Assembly. Can you please take that up.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution by Senator Stewart-Cousins, directing the Temporary President to appoint a committee of two to wait upon the Assembly and inform that body that the Senate is assembled and ready to proceed with business.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

THE PRESIDENT: Opposed?

(No response.)

THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is adopted.

Senators Skoufis and Jordan are hereby appointed to inform the Assembly that the Senate is ready to proceed.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, at this time I believe there's a hand-up at the desk by Senator Stewart-Cousins naming Majority members to certain standing committees. I ask that it please be filed in the Journal.

THE PRESIDENT: The hand-up is received and shall be filed with the Journal.

SENATOR GIANARIS: In consultation with Senator Flanagan, Senator Stewart-Cousins also hands up the following Minority member committee assignments and asks that they also be filed in the Journal.

THE PRESIDENT: The hand-up is received and shall be filed in the Journal.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, is there any further business at the desk?

THE PRESIDENT: There is no further business at the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: There being no further business, I move we adjourn until Monday, January 14th, at 3:00 p.m., intervening days being legislative days.

THE PRESIDENT: On motion, the Senate will stand adjourned until Monday, January 14th, at 3:00 p.m., intervening days being legislative days.

The Senate is adjourned.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, the Senate adjourned at 2:48 p.m.)