

**CHARLES L. COPELAND**  
STATE SENATOR  
Fourth - District



SENATE  
STATE OF DELAWARE  
LEGISLATIVE HALL  
DOVER, DELAWARE  
19901

COMMITTEES  
Administrative Services  
Education  
Energy & Transit  
Insurance & Elections  
Public Safety  
Small Business  
Sunset

NEWS RELEASE  
January 9, 2007

Contact: Charlie Copeland 656-4500  
Liane Sorenson 234-3303  
Steve Amick 738-0215

**The Fight for Open Government Continues:**  
**Senate Republicans Vote Unanimous “NO” to Senate Rules;**  
**Democrats evade public debate by a bare one-vote majority.**

As the Delaware General Assembly convened its new session today, Senate Republicans made a strong public statement to reaffirm their commitment to open government by voting a unanimous “NO” on Senate Resolution #2 which continued the Senate’s archaic Rules of closed operations.

The Republican effort came **one vote short** of achieving a public debate on the Rules. One Democrat Senator joined the Republicans in advocating reform, but 11 Democrats remaining all voted to re-adopt the old Rules. One more vote from any Democrat Senator to challenge the status quo would have led to a public discussion of the Rules.

Senate Republicans have pushed hard for 5 specific changes to give the public more information, access and input in the legislative process.

**Senate Republicans’ 5-point plan for more open**  
**and accountable government:**

- Pass legislation under FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) to define the General Assembly and all its standing and ad hoc committees as “public bodies”.
- Change Senate Rules to do away with the power of a Senate Committee chair to single-handedly kill legislation by preventing public debate.
-

- Change Senate Rules to create a deliberative process that guarantees legislation will get a public hearing in committee within a reasonable time frame.
- Post Senate Roll Call votes on the General Assembly website giving the public access to an accounting of individual votes by all Senators.
- Close loopholes to avoid the potential and appearance of conflict inherent in holding dual roles in government, including a prohibition on paid registered lobbyists holding office on state Authorities, Boards, Commissions and statutory Committees.

Senate Republicans have consistently sought more open Senate Rules. They made open government an issue during the 2006 election campaign as all Republican Senators and candidates pledged open government. Since then, House Republicans and House Democrats have joined the call for more transparency in government.

Senator Charlie Copeland, Minority Leader said “Senate Republicans made a strong point today that we are serious about open government. Our unanimous vote for new and better Rules was the next step, and we came within one vote of breaking the issue loose and having a public debate. The old Senate Rules are hanging by a single thread.”

“To their credit, the Majority Leadership gave us public assurance today on the Senate floor that Rules reform will be discussed. We take them at their word and look forward to those discussions. However, we must note that such promises have been made in the past, and the Committee on Permanent Rules has failed to meet for years thereafter. If there is no serious discussion of positive Rules changes before the end of January and no Rules Committee meetings scheduled during the Joint Finance session break, we will be compelled to raise this issue again.”

Senator Steve Amick, a long-time advocate of Senate Rules changes and member of the Rules Committee said “The changes we seek are in the public interest, make good sense, and are in line with what we require from all other decision-making public bodies in the state. I look forward to the Senate taking on bipartisan discussions to improve the process.”

Senate Minority Whip Liane Sorenson said “the Rules changes we propose are easy to accomplish and make common sense. The public ought to be able to know what’s happening, be able to comment and participate, and one person--a Committee Chair--should not have the power to kill a bill and prevent public debate by the ‘desk drawer veto’. This change will make the

process better and promote public participation and confidence in government.”

The Republican Senators & their Districts are: Senators Charlie Copeland (4<sup>th</sup>), Cathy Cloutier (5<sup>th</sup>), Liane Sorenson (6<sup>th</sup>), Steve Amick (10<sup>th</sup>), Dori Connor (12<sup>th</sup>), Colin Bonini (16<sup>th</sup>), John Still (17<sup>th</sup>) and Gary Simpson (18<sup>th</sup>).

###