

Opinion: Democrats are the real party of 'no'

By Tom DeL Beccaro

New York, New Jersey and California have a lot in common. They're populous states with Democratic legislative majorities, high taxes and big deficits. The difference, however, is that the New York and New Jersey Democrats have enacted reforms while California Democrats remain the Party of No.

Earlier this year, New Jersey's bond rating was downgraded by the S&P. New Jersey's debt level and poorly funded pension system was the reason. According to Moody's, New Jersey's combined pension and long-term debt liabilities are more than 222 percent of its yearly revenue. New Jersey also has the nation's highest tax rates. New York's combined pension and long-term debt liabilities are more than 101 percent of existing revenue. It had a \$10 billion deficit in 2011 and the second highest tax rates in the country. California's combined pension and long-term debt liabilities are more than 166 percent of its revenue. We face annual budget deficits in excess of \$15 billion and the highest tax rates in the West excluding Hawaii. One more thing in common: All three states have been dominated by Democrats for years.

Faced with dire balance sheets, Democrats in New York and New Jersey said yes to reform. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo declared, "The old way of solving the problem was continuing to raise taxes on people. And we just can't do that anymore." The new way included reductions in state spending, salary freezes, cuts to education, reductions in state workers and, yes, even income and property tax relief with the help of Democrat votes in the New York Legislature.

The story line from New Jersey was similar. New Jersey's Democrat-led Legislature required public workers to pay more for benefits. According to Democrat Louis Greenwald, a sponsor of the legislation, the bill brought "property tax relief," made "benefits sustainable for the working families who rely on them and preserve collective bargaining rights for future negotiations. This protects both taxpayers and worker rights."

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