

Governor sets stage to recall Legislature

Paterson, citing unfinished budget work, clears way for action

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ALBANY -- Gov. David Paterson started laying the cables Wednesday that could drag lawmakers back to town to complete the state budget.

And he used the occasion to once again poke the Legislature, which he blames for the continued delay.

"This Legislature would rather play parliamentary games than finish a budget that is 15 weeks late due to their inaction," Paterson said as he revoked earlier proclamations that triggered special legislative sessions in January and June.

Lawmakers noted that their leaders, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Democratic Majority Conference Leader John Sampson, have been working with one another all along and met in New York City on Wednesday.

"They are in constant contact," said Assembly Democratic spokeswoman Sisa Moyo, referring to Silver and Sampson.

"The Senate and Assembly are meeting themselves because the governor says he will not negotiate," said Austin Shafran, spokesman for the Senate Democrats.

Paterson earlier this summer said he was finished negotiating the budget. He then vetoed nearly 6,700 spending items that lawmakers had sought, including their pork-barrel allotment.

The action came as much of the budget, including the appropriations needed to keep the government running, was completed. In fact, the bulk of the approximately \$136 billion 2010-11 budget is settled. But the Senate has yet to pass the budget's revenue piece, which allows for the raising of new monies needed to keep the state afloat throughout the year.

Paterson's latest move looked to derail a potential parliamentary objection that lawmakers could have mounted to being called back to the Capitol. It also comes after Paterson's new round of revenue bills was rebuffed by lawmakers, who literally left the paperwork sitting outside their offices.

Because the governor ordered lawmakers back in January and June, legislators have maintained they have effectively remained in extraordinary sessions ever since because they never adjourned. Using that argument, the governor can't order them to go back into a session that has already been started.

Until now, lawmakers have complied when the governor has ordered them into session, although they're not required to act on his agenda when they get there. But recently, they started pointing out that the special sessions have remained in effect.

Revoking the prior sessions should remove the possibility that lawmakers could ignore Paterson's call to come back. When that might happen, though, remained unclear.

Some lawmakers have been on vacation and Paterson has been in Suffolk County for much of the week, prompting lawmakers to say he's on vacation too. Suffolk County is where the Hamptons beach towns are located.

Paterson spokesman Morgan Hook, though said in an email, "the governor is never on vacation."