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## **NY Senate GOP now in control of Democrats' budget**

By MICHAEL GORMLEY Associated Press Writer

ALBANY — Democrats in control of every statewide office and both houses of the Legislature likely have given the final say in the state budget to 30 Republicans in the Senate minority.

Democratic Gov. David Paterson's promise Monday night to veto all 6,900 budget additions and pork-barrel projects approved hours before by the Democrat-led Senate and Assembly means any override attempt would hinge on whether Republicans would side with Democrats. That's unlikely following months of Republican anger after being excluded from budget talks by the Democratic legislative leaders and Paterson.

On Monday, the GOP conference trashed the Democrats' budget in floor debates then voted against every bill.

Republican Sen. John DeFranciso, of Onondaga County, pressed Senate Finance Committee Chairman Carl Kruger, a Brooklyn Democrat, for any numbers about the size of the Democrats' budget, even just the total. Kruger said he didn't have a total yet, even as the bills were being voted upon.

Republican Sen. Michael Ranzenhofer, of Erie County, said it was "just astounding."

"No one would buy a car without knowing how much it costs," Ranzenhofer said.

Senate Republican leader Dean Skelos, of Nassau County, said Democrats had "broken their promise to the taxpayers and once again saddled them with spending they cannot afford."

But Republicans have refused to say how they would handle the threat of Paterson's vetoes, first made on Saturday. Given the hard partisan divide in the Senate, few if any overrides may even be attempted.

Paterson said after making his first veto Monday night that he wasn't casting the vetoes with an expectation of any override.

"I'm doing it because it's right for the state and hopefully it will bring our budget eventually into balance," he said. "What the Legislature does with it is the Legislature's prerogative, and I'll await their consideration. But they will have to override about 6,900 vetoes."

He referred to all the additional \$500 million in spending and policy changes the Legislature added to his budget proposal from January as well as \$190 million worth of pork-barrel grants that lawmakers send back home to their districts, an important tool in election years like this one. Although the grants were paid for in past budgets, Paterson is stopping the grants to be sent to health care and other programs and organizations this year.

"I never take any joy in vetoing education money, health care, services for the poor and the indigent," said Paterson, a lame duck Democrat who spent 20 years as a senator advocating for many of the programs he's now cutting. "It breaks my heart to do this."

He said the reason for doing it was that "to do otherwise would be proverbially kicking the can down the road and creating a greater problem."

He called the major elements of the budget approved Monday irresponsible, unbalanced and worse than continuing a miserable fiscal status quo. The state faces a \$9.2 billion deficit in the second full year of a fiscal crisis.

Senate Democratic majority spokesman Austin Shafran said it was "a typical Albany power play with schoolchildren and taxpayers caught in the middle."

"We passed a balanced budget that makes tough cuts and smart restorations while providing New Yorkers with well-deserved tax relief," he said.

The budget, which was due April 1, is estimated at about \$136 billion.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said vetoes will mean larger classes, higher property taxes and more expensive tuition at the State University of New York and the City University of New York.

"The budget passed by the Legislature would dramatically reduce state spending, restore funding for our schools and maintain our fundamental commitment to ensuring that SUNY and CUNY remain affordable for all New Yorkers," Silver said.

Republican Assemblyman James Tedisco, of Schenectady County, said of the Democratic governor and legislative majorities: "If they had a third foot they'd shoot that, too."