

State Senate Democrats are \$7M in debt after spending like 'drunken sailors'

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[ALBANY](#) - Spend-happy Senate Democrats leave their two years in the majority in the same shape they helped leave the state - deep in debt.

The Senate Democratic conference exceeded its \$29 million legislative budget by a whopping \$7 million, or 24%, Senate sources said.

Salaries for Democratic staffers are now being paid with money left over from unspent money from previous budgets, they concede.

[Sen. Martin Golden \(R-Brooklyn\)](#) called the excessive payouts "the height of irresponsibility" at a time the state is dealing with one of its worst fiscal crises ever.

"It goes along with the [billions of dollars] in new spending, taxes and fees they agreed to in the budget," Golden said. "The last two years they've spent like drunken sailors."

Senate Republicans, conversely, came in \$2 million under the \$23 million they had been allocated, sources said.

Senate Democratic officials confirmed the budget numbers, but had no comment.

Insiders say much of the Democratic overspending traces back to the leadership coup that paralyzed the House for a month last year.

After the Republicans claimed to have retaken the chamber, the Democrats wrested control back through a series of costly agreements.

Among them, [Senate President Malcolm Smith](#) kept his title but turned virtually all his power over to [Sen. John Sampson](#), who became the Democratic conference leader.

[Sen. Pedro Espada](#), meanwhile, was lured back into the Democratic fold with a promise of the title of majority leader.

As a result, Sampson and Espada greatly beefed up their staffs while at the same time Smith left his virtually intact.

"One of those three should be entitled to have that kind of money and staff, not all three," said one source.

The scandal-scorched Espada, for example, secured \$1.5 million for staffing costs post-coup, up from \$750,000 pre-coup.

Espada also received funding for two offices, one in his [Bronx](#) district carrying a \$54,000-per-year tab and a second \$56,202-a-year space that housed his Senate Urban Policy and Planning office.

A source blamed Sampson for the ballooning budget: "You can't get shaken down."

[Democrats](#) fear that when Republicans take control of the chamber in January they'll slash the Dems' budget to make up the \$7 million deficit.

The state's top court ensured the Senate control for the [GOP](#) yesterday by rejecting a losing Dem's demand for a hand recount.