

Sections

CAPITOL CONFIDENTIAL**LATEST NEWS FROM THE TIMES UNION CAPITOL BUREAU****The politics of secession**By [Matthew Hamilton](#) on August 31, 2015 at 11:01 AM

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Secession isn't exactly a new idea, but **as I reported** in today's TU, the groups behind the latest effort to split upstate from downstate say they aren't just doing it for show.

"Of course it's caused by frustration, but we're serious," said John Bergener Jr. of Divide New York State Caucus. "We've incorporated a political action committee to fund it. We're serious. There's no doubt that we're trying to do it."

The Divide New York plan calls for a complete bypassing of the state Legislature and Congress by using a constitutional convention to try to get an amendment in front of voters in 2017. That amendment would call for the state to be split into two autonomous regions (upstate would become New Amsterdam; downstate would become New York).

That's an uphill battle, but it would seem to be less of an incline to tackle than trying to convince the political forces that be to approve secession.

That isn't to say some political will — be it serious or just for posturing — hasn't been behind the secession idea at the state level before. Recently, State Sen. Joe Robach, R-Greece, **has pitched** the idea of two separate New Yorks.

Assemblyman Stephen Hawley, R-Batavia, **supports that idea** of a referendum putting the question of the need for two New Yorks to voters.

Let's say for arguments sake that secession creating a 51st state actually happened. While there are a few different ways the state Legislature(s) could shake out, let's also say that the new upstate and downstate (we'll use the Westchester-Rockland cutoff that Divide New York does) establish Legislatures

identical to what New York has now.

Politically, the divides in the Assembly and state Senate would look a lot different.

“It would change the majorities, it would change the dynamics, it would change an awful lot of stuff,” SUNY New Paltz distinguished professor of political science Gerald Benjamin said in an interview last week. “... It depends where you made the cut, but let’s just say you took out the New York metro area ... the politics would change. The Republican-Democrat balance would change. There’d be a chance for Republican control of both houses of the Legislature. The downstate area would be entirely Democrat.”

The new Senate breakdown for both states would look like this (NOTE: For simplicity, I’m counting IDC members as Democrats and state Sen. Simcha Felder — who caucuses with the Republicans — as a Democrat. Also note that there are currently two vacant seats — one formerly held by a Republican upstate and one formerly held by a Democrat in New York City):

- Downstate: 26 Democrats-11 Republicans
- Upstate (NOTE: Sens. William Larkin and Terrence Murphy are counted here because most of their districts are outside of Westchester and Rockland counties): 20 Republicans-four Democrats

The Assembly breakdown is similar (NOTE: Again, for simplicity, I’m counting Independence Party member Fred Thiele as a Democrat because he caucuses with that conference. As with the Senate, there are vacant seats, all three of which were Democratic):

- Downstate: 79 Democrats-16 Republicans
- Upstate: 27 Republicans-25 Democrats

Registration statistics are predictably similar as well (NOTE: I’m using the “active” voter numbers).

- Downstate: 3,797,040 Democrats-1,208,211 Republicans
- Upstate: 1,464,964 Democrats-1,355,713 Republicans

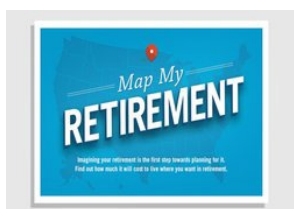
The stats are telling. And obviously a flip of the party holding the majorities could dramatically change the policies that are (or aren’t) passed.

But by and large, legislators focus on their local districts. Yes, the Legislature passes statewide policy, but lawmakers generally are focused on how that statewide policy will affect their constituents. Thus, even with different parties in

power, there remains a question.

“If you just take the current crop of politicians holding state and local office upstate, do you assume that they are going to govern that much differently than we are already governed?” the Empire Center’s E.J. McMahon said. “You really think like Pat Fahy is going to vote differently if she’s representing a district in a different state?”

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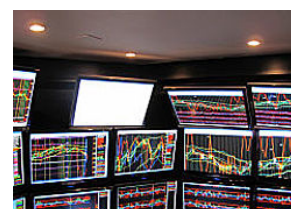
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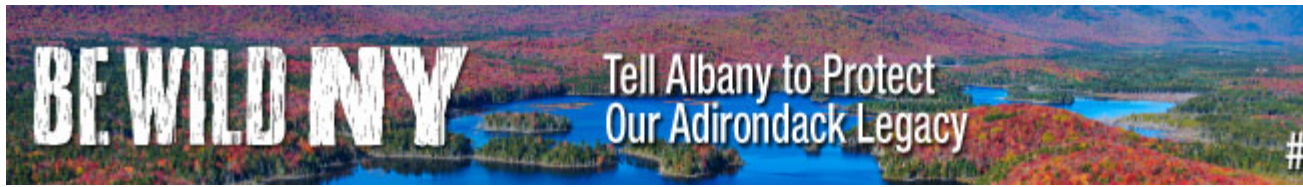
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16 Responses

floydianship says:

August 31, 2015 at 11:40 am

Federal Republicans would love this too. 2 more U.S. Senators with a good opportunity to negate downstate. "New Amsterdam" would lose congressional representation in the next census...but that's ok. I am sure New Amsterdam's State Legislature would gerrymander Dems out of existence. The GOP would split Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse 4 ways just like they do to Texas cities.

Bernie Fan says:

August 31, 2015 at 11:45 am

"downstate would become New York)."

Huh...downstate already is New York....lol.

So, when New Amsterdanistan becomes a Republican third world state, do the blue states have to subsidize it like we subsidize the other Republican states nowadays, since blue, productive states are the greatest contributors to our economy?

Hawthorn says:

August 31, 2015 at 11:49 am

There goes all the money with downstate--that's where all the tax revenue comes from. The rest of the state lives off of that revenue.

John says:

August 31, 2015 at 11:58 am

Our Secession plan calls for establishing a more republican form of government than than strange form of democracy NYS currently has which allows Downstate state to rule upstate, while upstate can occasionally block things downstate wishes to enact. We would form Two Autonomous Regions the New Amsterdam Region (upstate) and the New York Region (downstate) alongside a token state government to comply with the US Constitution. The token NYS government that remains would have about the same power as the Queen of England! Because we are forming regions not a new state or moving counties between states; Congress can be legally bypassed. If NYS Legislature fails to act, this plan also has the option to bypass the NYS Legislature; because every twenty years the people of NYS get to vote on whether to hold a NY State Constitutional Convention. If we vote YES on the NYS Convention, Delegates are elected for the Convention the following November. The Convention can then submit an amendment to divide NY State into regions with token state government directly to the voters. The next time the Convention vote will be held is Nov 2017. Our autonomous regions method is more likely to succeed!

Outline of Amendment, to NYS Constitution, to divide NY State into Upstate (New Amsterdam) and Downstate (New York) Regions. This Amendment creates two fully autonomous regions. The token state government is needed to comply with the US Constitution is kept small by limiting its taxing power to a three (3) percent sales tax; with all other taxing power transferred to the regions. The token state laws are limited to those related to Executive (for the state only), Indian, Legislative (for the state only), National Guard, Retirement & Social Security, State Administrative Procedure & State Finance (for the state only), Civil Service (state employees only), Court of Appeals, State Court of Claims, State Judicial Conduct. All the rest of the laws, which are about 3/4 of NY laws, become regional laws of each region and are deleted from the state code. Each region can then independently modify them.

Regional Senators from both regions will also serve as the New York State Senate; Regional Assemblypersons from both regions will also serve as the New York State Assembly. The regular sessions for regional Legislatures are limited to January, February, and March. Fiscal years of each region will be from March 1 to last day of February. The State Legislature regular session is limited to April and May; The State fiscal year, from May 1 to April 30.

Each region shall have an elected Regional Governor, Regional Lieutenant-Governor, and Regional Secretary of State. The Regional Governor appoints most officials including the Education Commissioner; the Regional Secretary of State appoints the Regional Attorney General and Regional Motor Vehicles Commissioner. The token state government will keep an elected-Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, and Comptroller. In order to prevent opposition the transfer of state departments/agencies/employees to regional departments/agencies/employees is explained in detail in the amendment and the pension system remains at the state level unchanged. The New York region would still pay for its residents attending New Amsterdam's regional colleges and vice versa. Local Governments ownership rights are not affected by this Amendment so the City of New York retains ownership of its water system.

Most of the powers of the Court of Appeals powers are transferred to each newly created Regional Superior Court which has final say on ruling on its region laws. Felonies can only be enacted under regional law. Judicial departments are adjusted so they do not cross regional boundaries.

WNYer says:

August 31, 2015 at 1:25 pm

Dude – you need a hobby. Preferably something that will get you some fresh air...

Bernie Fan says:

August 31, 2015 at 12:21 pm

Will New Amsterdamistan then join the other 27 Republican States that are being subsidized by the hard working blue states. Top 10: New Mexico, Mississippi, Alaska, Louisiana, West Virginia, North Dakota, Alabama, South Dakota, Kentucky, Virginia, Montana. Family values bit no great work ethic.

Philip says:

August 31, 2015 at 12:23 pm

Shame on the Times Union for covering this as serious news. These people are a joke and should be treated as graduates of a clown college, not a real political movement (100 people got together and wrote some politics fantasies, front page news!!)

—
It's the same thing with these tea party knuckleheads. When they don't get what by want, they kick, scream and act like the five year olds they politically are.

elmer says:

August 31, 2015 at 1:26 pm

Was going to give a "Ha Ha" thumbs up to "New Amsterdamistan", then read John's post. Not sure it's a joke any more!!!! Love the "Autonomous Regions"—who knew these uber-conservatives would use China as a playbook?

Brian (MOFYC) says:

August 31, 2015 at 1:29 pm

I guess secessionists want us to become the next Alabama!

N-PC says:

August 31, 2015 at 3:24 pm

I wouldn't worry too much about funding. I anticipate after the split a change in public assistance rules would lead to a mass exodus to NYC. It's a win-win for you bleeding heart liberals. Think of all the good you'll be doing.

Demographically speaking, foreign born people would be only 11% for New Amsterdam vs. 37% for NYC.

Dale Gribble says:

September 1, 2015 at 9:42 am

So how would New Amsterdam Fund its public assistance ?

Or are we only pretending that it is people in NYC getting public assistance and not those in the rest of the state?

elmer says:

August 31, 2015 at 5:40 pm

N-PC, why would there be any exodus from upstate (where all are pure and morally correct) to NYC? Whoever lives upstate who would do that?

Dying for the response.

N-PC says:

September 1, 2015 at 7:56 am

Follow the money. Cut Public assistance and watch a mass exodus to NYC. Then NYC can "come out" as a

Safe city like San Fran. NYC liberals will love it. Of course they'll be living on Long Island so their social experiment won't impact their home life.

elmer says:

September 1, 2015 at 10:37 am

So there would be a mass exodus out of New Amsterdamistan of people on public assistance? But I thought upstate was filled with independent, conservative achievers?

hawkny says:

September 1, 2015 at 10:15 am

We all have our different ways of saying the same thing, "Upstate New York is hurting economically, socially and culturally, by the New York City-centric ways of doing business and distributing the wealth collected by New York State government.

Granted, New York City/Long Island kick in more to the state treasury than they receive back.

But metropolitan New York's ability to do so hinges on the location of all the corporations located within the city's politically boundaries. The downstate region has the means to be generous. Upstate does not. And lets not forget where important infrastructure, like water, food, and electrical power come from to quench the demand of one and all in the 5 boroughs.

I for one think that there should not be any state with more than 12,000,000 in population nor less than 6,000,000 but that is on a national scale. That said, New York's government has every obligation to its upstate citizens to stimulate the creation of good paying jobs, both private and public. And, needless today, what has been done to date in this regard is a mere pittance of what could be done by the political establishment if it set its mind to doing what is right for all the people.

Bernie Fan says:

September 1, 2015 at 11:02 am

“New York's government has every obligation to its upstate citizens to stimulate the creation of good paying jobs, both private and public. And, needless today, what has been done to date in this regard is a mere pittance of what could be done by the political establishment if it set its mind to doing what is right for all the people.”

Hawk, well stated. I agree with your statement, in general. Don't forget, though, the he



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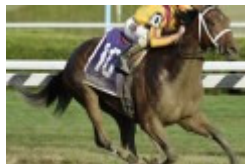
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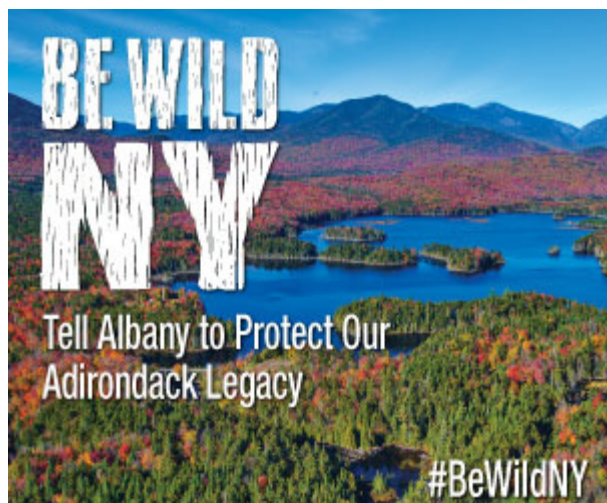
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