

The New York Times

City Room

Blogging From the Five Boroughs

NOVEMBER 18, 2008, 3:05 PM

State Leaders Fail to Reach Budget Deal

By [JEREMY W. PETERS](#)

The State Senate majority leader, Dean G. Skelos, and Gov. David A. Paterson met in Albany on Tuesday, but made no progress on settling the state's budget woes. (Photo: Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times)

ALBANY — Gov. [David A. Paterson](#) canceled the emergency legislative session he had convened to address the state's widening budget deficit on Tuesday after failing to reach a consensus with legislative leaders.

Mr. Paterson sat for over an hour in the Capitol with the leaders of both parties for a highly unusual public meeting that was by turns emotional, contentious and playful. By the time the meeting ended — with Mr. Paterson agreeing to back off his insistence that the Legislature act on his deficit reduction plan — it was clear that no action would be taken this year to plug the \$1.5 billion hole that has opened up in the state budget.

The chances that Mr. Paterson could strike a deal with legislators evaporated quickly from Sunday night to Tuesday afternoon, after Senate Republicans refused to drop their objections to the governor's proposals to cut education and health care spending. It was also unclear that Democrats in the Legislature would go along with the plan as Mr. Paterson presented it.

Outside the Capitol, thousands of union members protested the governor's proposed budget cuts. (Photo: Mike Groll/Associated Press)

The lack of action by legislators angered Mr. Paterson, who complained at one point during Tuesday's meeting, "No one has actually offered any alternatives to my plan.

He added, "And no one seems to want to negotiate and find ways we can cut our spending now."

Mr. Paterson directed most of his outrage at [Dean G. Skelos](#), the Republican leader of the State Senate. "I never got a suggestion from you," he said to Mr. Skelos at one point. "What I got is a lecture."

Mr. Paterson's criticisms were echoed loudly by [Malcolm A. Smith](#), the minority leader of the Senate, who called Mr. Skelos's objections to the governor's plan "gamesmanship" and "a charade."

In January, Republicans will lose their majority in the Senate. And some Democrats have suggested that they blocked Mr. Paterson's bill as a way to embarrass the governor on their way out.

In a surprise political maneuver, Senate Republicans said Monday night that they would bring Mr. Paterson's legislation to a vote. The governor blasted that as a purely political move because the bills would very likely fail without Republican support. He then called

Tuesday's public meeting to put Republicans on the spot.

Mr. Skelos insisted that he was only honoring the governor's request to have a vote on the bill regardless of what the outcome could be.

"You stated, 'I want the Senate and the Assembly to vote on my bills,'" said Mr. Skelos, reading from a transcript of remarks that Mr. Paterson made on Monday. "Governor, today the Senate is prepared to honor your request."

But Mr. Paterson said he would not put his legislation up for a vote, just to see it fail.