

Center for Judicial Accountability

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

By Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz
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With Friends Like That, Who Needs Enemies?

You should know that here in Albany, you can find bookies taking and placing bets all over the place. Ever since U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara released the names of six Democratic Senators who were recorded by disgraced Senator Shirley Huntley, Albany has become an ambulatory casino in New York State.

Senators Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Velmanette Montgomery, Eric Adams, José Peralta, John Sampson and Malcolm Smith were all recorded by Senator Shirley Huntley after she was caught with her hand in the cookie jar. She tried to save her skin by coming to an agreement with the FBI to wear recording equipment where she secretly, hypocritically invited people who were supposed to be her friends to visit her at her house – just to record them and try to bring them down.

With friends like that, who needs enemies?

It is important for you to know that only their names were released. Nothing concrete and nothing damaging about them has ever been revealed. It is for that reason that all of the bookies and crapshooters are going around, placing their bets and playing their games.

Some high-rollers here in the State Capitol are also betting on the odds of Assemblyman Sheldon Silver's future as Speaker after his secret handling of sexual abuse cases in the Assembly. It's hard to walk in any room in Albany without hearing someone discussing the odds of how much time Assemblyman Silver has left.

Friends and foes are going all around the State Capitol wagering about who they think will be the next elected official to go down. Some are gambling about who they think is going around wearing recording devices. They're also placing their odds about who is inviting their colleagues to dinners and parties under the disguise of friendship, just to put them in jail.

With friends like that, who needs enemies?

So far, the biggest surprise of all in this mess was the comment made by a Queens Senator (and Democrat) Tony Avella, to Mr. Ken Lovett from the New York Daily News when he was asked to comment. Mr. Lovett reported: "Avella said he's not surprised that fellow Queens Democrat Sen. Jose Peralta is among the six sitting senators ex-Sen. Shirley Huntley is said to have met with at her home while wearing a wire for the FBI."

It appears to me that Senator Tony Avella placed himself in the role judge, jury and executioner to publicly condemn Senator José Peralta to the world.

If Senator Avella does not know about actual wrong-doings by Senator Peralta, then Senator Tony Avella owes a public apology to Senator José Peralta, to Senator Peralta's constituents, to his Democratic colleagues, to the Hispanic community – and especially to the Dominican community.

In fact, if Senator Tony Avella was bearing false witness to Mr. Ken Lovett about Senator José Peralta, I'd have to say that Senator Avella owes an apology to the entire Borough of Queens since his words may have ruined Senator Peralta's chances of becoming the Queens Borough President. This could be true even if there are no criminal charges ever brought against Senator Peralta and even if Senator Peralta proves to be the cleanest person on the earth!

If, on the other hand, Senator Tony Avella knows something about José Peralta that I don't know about, then I will be the one who owes an apology to Tony Avella.

"My friends are my friends with all of their virtues and all of their defects," my father used to say to my mother when I was young.

My father, Mr. Isaac Diaz Amecquita was well-known in Puerto Rico for his virtues as a carpenter, as a dominoes player, but also by his fidelity to his friends. To the world, he would defend his friends whenever they were criticized. He never abandoned his friends, especially when they were down. These childhood memories cause me to compare how friendships were valued in those days and how they are valued now. I also remember the old saying: "A friend is a dollar in your pocket, and if the pocket is broken, there is no friend."

So, ladies and gentlemen, with friends like Tony Avella, Senator Peralta needs no enemies.

This is Senator Reverend Rubén Díaz and this is what you should know.