



Pedro ducks and covers: Sen. Espada chickens out on farm worker rights bill

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Remember how state Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada announced, in a confrontation with a duck farm overseer, that he would champion the rights of New York farmworkers?

Well that was nothing more than, we'll be tersely polite, bull.

Espada vowed the Senate would vote on a bill to provide labor protections to field hands. Instead, he threw them under the tractor to protect his lush nest.

Joining Espada in betraying a workforce denied the right to overtime, days off and collective bargaining was John Sampson, Democratic conference boss.

Sampson and Espada are among 28 sponsors of a farmworkers bill. Four more senators have pledged support, bringing the tally of backers to 32 - the majority needed to pass a measure that has the blessings of the Assembly and Gov. Paterson.

Sampson and Espada shelved the legislation Thursday. Why? Because upstate Democrats fear they will be challenged for reelection if the bill passes. Were that to happen and were any to fall, the Democrats would lose majority control of the Senate.

And Espada and Sampson would lose their big offices and their power to dole out tax dollars.

For Espada, that includes funneling money to a Bronx clinic that formerly paid him salary and benefits worth \$400,000 - which is more per annum than most farmworkers will see in a lifetime of labor. This is Albany: rotten to the core.