



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of January 2, 2023 -- 'Will we see a redirection of New York's priorities?'

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 2, 2023

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Governor Hochul needs to be focused on turning things around, rebuilding stronger and safer communities, and working toward a more responsible and sustainable future for Upstate, middle-class communities, families, workers, businesses, industries, and taxpayers. Will she lead the way on an agenda with these priorities?

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "**Will we see a redirection of New York's priorities?**"

Welcome to the New Year in New York State government.

At the top of the list this week, however, let's first send our collective thoughts toward our neighbors in Western New York where lives have been lost and communities so hard hit by a historically devastating winter storm. We wish them continued strength and perseverance as local, state, and federal agencies, emergency responders, and volunteers continue to come to their aid.

In these earliest days of the 2023 legislative session, the spotlight will be on Governor Kathy Hochul while she sets the stage for her first full term as New York's chief executive. From her Inaugural Address on New Year's Day through a State of the State message to the Legislature the following week, Governor Hochul will begin to show what direction she intends to lead this state.

Many of us hope it will be a redirection -- a redirection of priorities and resources to begin truly addressing unmet challenges and crises, as well as charting a course for a saner, more sensible, and more sustainable state government.

For my part, I hope to hear this governor deliver unequivocal commitments to:

--a safer and better quality of life for all New Yorkers by making fighting crime, supporting law enforcement and crime victims, and restoring public safety and security as one of the state's highest responsibilities;

--making New York more affordable by cutting the state's highest-in-the-nation tax burden and one of the country's heaviest burdens of debt;

--refusing the continuation of the out-of-control government spending that has defined her tenure so far and that many fear will make the nation's highest population losses even worse;

--rethinking and slowing down a process to quickly implement radical energy mandates that ignore affordability, reliability, and sustainability;

--truly transforming the state-local partnership by making good on a promise made by her predecessor over a decade ago to address the outrageous practice of unfunded state mandates;

--recognizing that passing the buck for the state's failure to address the Unemployment Insurance crisis to small business owners and other employers is wrong and risks the post-COVID recovery of the state and local economies;

--refusing to take any actions that add to the burden or jeopardize the future of New York's family farms, including lowering the farmworker overtime threshold from 60 to 40 hours;

--finally, fully, and honestly engaging a reassessment of New York's COVID response, including its tragic failures and shortcomings, especially within the state's nursing homes;

--combating an exploding fentanyl crisis; and

--restoring accountability to state government in the aftermath of disgraced ex-Governor Andrew Cuomo's rampant abuses of executive power.

I have said it throughout the past year, and I'll say it again at the start of this New Year: New Yorkers across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions I represent, and statewide, are worried about making ends meet. They see this state becoming less safe, less affordable, less free, less economically competitive, less responsible, and far less hopeful for the future. They see Albany Democrats focused on out-of-control spending with no commitment to eliminating taxes, lowering costs, or cutting burdensome regulations and mandates.

Governor Hochul needs to be focused on turning things around, rebuilding stronger and safer communities, and working toward a more responsible and sustainable future for Upstate, middle-class communities, families, workers, businesses, industries, and taxpayers. Will she lead the way on an agenda with these priorities?

We're about to find out.

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