



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of August 14, 2023 -- 'A state being defined by recklessness'

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August 14, 2023

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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, "A state being defined by recklessness"

The greatest hits just keep coming out of Albany. Unfortunately, it goes on sounding like a broken record of irresponsibility and recklessness – especially on the economic and fiscal fronts.

Over the past several months, particularly since the enactment of a final 2023-2024 state budget that rang in as New York's largest-ever spending plan, it's been one fiscal alarm after another warning of even tougher economic times ahead for all New Yorkers.

New York State's budget in 2018, the last year that Republicans held the majority in the state Senate, totaled \$170 billion. This year, Governor Hochul proposed a \$227-billion spending plan knowing full well that the Democrat majorities in the Legislature would force the final budget to go well beyond that to upwards of \$230 billion – an increase in state spending of approximately \$60 billion, or approaching 40%, over the last five years.

Another way to look at this outrageous and overwhelming growth in spending is that the \$60-billion-plus increase alone is larger than the entire budgets of 35 states.

We have already been warned that current state spending is unaffordable. New York faces a nearly \$10-billion deficit in the next fiscal year, followed by consecutive fiscal year deficits of \$13.9 billion and \$13.5 billion.

Two years ago, following the enactment of that year's final budget, my reaction was the following, "We had an opportunity and a responsibility to enact a fiscally responsible, short- and long-term strategy for the post-COVID rebuilding, restoring, and resetting of local communities, economies, environments, and governments for the long term. Equally important, we needed to recognize the fiscal challenges New York will face for the foreseeable future and steer clear of any massive new taxing and spending. That's not what this budget represents. It sets up an economic and fiscal disaster."

What's most alarming is that it's all been taking place while Governor Hochul and legislative Democrats have set in motion even more enormously expensive state spending commitments, including a radical strategy to somehow transform New York to a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions economy that is projected to cost as high as \$340 billion but will likely end up costing far in excess of current projections. Far in excess. The governor and Albany Democrats can't tell anyone how high because they don't really know – including not knowing exactly how to pay for it.

Over the past few months, as well, we have seen the continually rising tide of migrant asylum seekers flooding the streets of New York City and, from there, being shipped out across this state. Governor Hochul demanded \$1 billion in this year's final budget to begin providing housing and social services to incoming migrants and has already authorized emergency spending for even more assistance. One billion dollars, then, is the starting line for state spending on migrant assistance, which signals that it's going to end up costing far beyond that (at this point, we can only

imagine how high) with no responsible or surefire plan in place to pay for it.

We all know where it's headed: Spending spending, spending inevitably followed by taxing, taxing, taxing. We've already seen proposals floated for income tax hikes, gas tax increases, cost shifts to local governments, and more.

New York is already recognized as one of America's highest taxed, least affordable, least business friendly, least free states. We are one of the most debt-ridden states. We lead the nation in population losses. We are singled out as one of the worst places for retirees. We're overregulated and impose one of the heaviest burdens of unfunded state mandates. New York's business tax climate has long been noted as one of the nation's worst.

Still, Governor Hochul and the Legislature's Democrats just keep spending, as I've said many times this past year, the roof off the state Capitol. It promises a future of higher taxes, more and higher fees, and skyrocketing debt for every New York taxpayer.

In one of America's highest-taxed, highest-spending states, the Albany Democrat plan for New York keeps setting new and ever-greater standards of recklessness.

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