



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of January 8, 2024 -- 'Will the Albany Democrats keep right on spending?'

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 8, 2024

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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

Do Albany Democrats have the first inkling that taxpayers cannot begin to afford it in a state that is already one of the highest taxed and least affordable in the nation? New York's nation-leading population losses say it loud and clear that the answer is a resounding NO.

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 the Albany Democrats keep right on spending?"**

In short order, beginning with this week's State of the State message to the Legislature followed by the unveiling of her 2024-2025 proposed state budget later this month, Governor Kathy Hochul will begin spelling out her priorities for the future of New York.

Will they be the right priorities?

At this moment, I believe I share the sentiment of many New Yorkers when I express dismay about where this state is headed. Over the past several years of witnessing firsthand New York government under one-party control, especially in my capacity as the Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, it has been a front row seat to what has been nothing short of a breathtaking Albany Democrat spending spree.

Last April, for example, Governor Hochul and the Democrat legislative majorities in the Senate and Assembly once again never blinked an eye while stocking up what would become New York's largest-ever state budget, despite many of us warning about its irrational spending. Remember that last year's final 2023-2024 budget rang in at roughly \$230 billion, hiking New York government spending by at least another \$9 billion over the previous year while simply ignoring the affordability crisis we faced (and still face), the overriding need for mandate relief, regulatory reform, or permanent, broad-based tax relief.

In fact, the Democrats' spending appetite over the past several years has been just that: a one-party smorgasbord gobbling up billions of taxpayer dollars. It's been uncontrolled spending to the point that having put into place massive, long-term spending commitments -- and with massive commitments looming in the Democrats' pursuit of a radical climate agenda and the provision of untold services to an ever-surging migrant population -- New York State taxpayers already face multi-year, multi-billion-dollar deficits, beginning with a more than \$4 billion gap this coming budget cycle.

Do Albany Democrats have the first inkling that taxpayers cannot begin to afford it in a state that is already one of the highest taxed and least affordable in the nation? New York's nation-leading population losses say it loud and clear that the answer is a resounding NO.

In my view, that's the key question here at the beginning of this new legislative session: Will Governor Hochul and the biggest-spending state Legislature in history go on believing, somehow, that New York State government can just keep on spending like there's no tomorrow?

At the start of this year's budget adoption cycle -- at a time when the future of the economy and financial markets remains uncertain, at best -- many Albany, socialist-leaning Democrats continue to hint that they have no taste whatsoever for fiscal restraint. They'll do whatever it takes to produce the resources that will be necessary to meet their unaffordable and unsustainable climate goals and, believe me, utility ratepayers and taxpayers are going to shoulder the burden. They'll be looking to provide anything and everything needed, including state-sponsored health insurance, to any and all illegal migrants that can find their way here to collect.

I can promise you that our Senate Republican Conference will remain a voice for spending restraint, as well as for lower taxes, less regulation, affordability, economic growth, job creation, and more common sense on state economic and fiscal practices.

New York government cannot continue down this road of high taxes, unrestrained spending, unfunded mandates, overregulation, and all the other obstacles to sustained economic growth and job creation statewide. It's been irresponsible. It has left us in a state in decline.

We need to keep working against a New York State tax and regulatory mindset that has put manufacturers and businesses of all sorts, including our proud agricultural industry, at a competitive disadvantage and imposes red tape that strangles local economies.

We must keep working against the out-of-control state spending that, more than anything else, has defined this era of Albany Democrat control of the purse strings of government.

We have to fight for lower taxes, economic growth, job creation, regulatory reform, debt reduction, and other actions that prioritize creating opportunities for a stronger and more affordable future for all New Yorkers.

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