



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of June 3, 2024 -- 'Nickel-and-diming New Yorkers to the breaking point'

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 3, 2024

| ISSUE: **STATE GOVERNMENT SPENDING; TAXPAYERS**



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

The defining action of this era in state government: out-of-control spending that is nickel-and-diming New Yorkers to the breaking point.

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, "**Nickel-and-diming New Yorkers to the breaking point**"

State government's spending habit has become so addictive that, eventually, every move that everyday citizens make in New York will come attached with another tax or a new fee or a higher cost.

Already we find out, directly from Governor Hochul's own Division of the Budget (DOB), that the cost of the recently enacted, 2024-25 state budget has already increased by at least \$2 billion. When legislators voted on the budget in late April, we were told that the new state spending plan would total \$237 billion. The DOB's new report -- which, by the way, was quietly released on a recent Friday afternoon -- now essentially says, "Hang on, it's actually \$239 billion."

That's a big difference. It means that state spending has increased by \$10 billion over last year. It's not just pocket change we're talking about. It will have an enormous impact on the future for all of us.

In fact, the DOB now projects that current state spending will far outpace revenue in the coming years, to the tune of \$2.3 billion in the next fiscal year, \$4.3 billion the following year, and \$7.3 billion the year after that, or a roughly \$14 billion deficit overall.

Fiscal watchdogs, including the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), argue that the future is even more alarming and that New York's structural deficit could exceed \$16 billion in the 2028 fiscal year alone.

From the CBC: "State leaders basically have two choices. They can either try to bring spending growth down to what it was in the teens, or they can continue to kick the can down the road."

From the DOB: "The State's financial position is expected to remain strong over the multi-year plan. However, out-year budget gaps are projected as spending is expected to exceed available resources and will need to be addressed in future years."

Here's the trouble with the DOB's more rose-colored analysis: Since 2018, these Albany Democrats have shown no ability (or willingness) whatsoever to stop their out-of-control spending addiction. They have done nothing but kick the can down the road toward fiscal disaster.

It keeps coming down to this, year after year, under one-party control: dire fiscal forecasts keep arriving, not only after an ongoing, unprecedented, multi-year spending spree, but also at the same time the Democrats keep initiating enormous, additional state spending commitments for which they don't even yet know the final price tag. A burgeoning illegal migrant crisis. Increased Medicaid spending. A multi-billion-dollar Unemployment Insurance debt. And let's not forget the costs of Albany's Green New Deal with its outrageously costly, full electrification mandates, to name just a few.

This year's final, now \$239 billion spending plan is just the latest chapter. They have simply and carelessly thrown caution (right along with taxpayer dollars) to the wind. Since 2018, they have increased state spending by nearly \$70 billion -- and far too much of it in a relentless pursuit of a misguided, questionable, unsustainable political agenda. It's been an increase in excess of 41% in just five years alone of one-party control in Albany.

So here we go. The ink is barely dry on the latest, largest-ever Democrat budget and the governor's own DOB already warns that the state is spending more -- far more -- than it makes. The ink is barely dry and New York State is already in the red for many years ahead.

New York State's budget in 2018, the last year that Republicans held the majority in the state Senate, totaled \$170 billion. Following this year's nearly \$240 billion budget, as noted above, state spending has increased approximately \$70 billion.

Governor Hochul and her Democrat allies in the Legislature have simply cemented what will always be the defining action of this era in state government: out-of-control spending that is nickel-and-diming New Yorkers to the breaking point.

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