



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of September 30, 2024 -- 'Tiptoeing around state spending won't cut it now'

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 30, 2024

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

You wonder why most New Yorkers are more pessimistic than they've been in a long time. 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, **"Tiptoeing around state spending won't cut it now"**

Last week in this column I highlighted how the latest statewide poll from the Siena College Research Institute included a finding that less than one-third of New Yorkers think this state is headed in the right direction.

"This is the most pessimistic New Yorkers have been about the direction of the state in at least a decade," according to the Siena analysis.

This finding is not a surprise. If you've been paying attention -- and clearly many of this state's citizens and taxpayers have been -- it's been building for a long time, for a variety of reasons.

Take state spending, for example. Back in late April, when Governor Hochul and the Legislature's all-Democrat supermajorities finally got around to enacting a late state budget, they put the finishing touches on the most expensive state budget in New York's history. Yet it marked just the latest in a string of continually escalating state spending plans over the past six years in this state under one-party control.

The numbers are startling and warrant a reminder: 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, state spending has increased approximately \$70 billion, or upwards of 40%. In their relentless pursuit of a misguided, questionable, unsustainable political agenda, Albany Democrats have simply and carelessly thrown caution (right along with taxpayer dollars) to the wind. There's no other way to say it.

So much so that even the governor's own budget division, back in June, projected that current state spending will far outpace revenue in 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. Other fiscal watchdogs, including the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), warn that the future could be even more dire, and that New York's structural deficit could exceed \$16 billion in the 2028 fiscal year alone.

Back in April, in my capacity as the Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, I called the latest state fiscal plan "the most bloated and wasteful government budget in America." In the months ahead, you're likely to start hearing out of Albany phrases like "budget freeze," or "spending restraint," or the need to "stabilize and be realistic" about the state's finances.

Let's be clear: We've heard these words from Albany Democrats before. As many of us have said many times over the past several years, their tenure has been defined (and will now forever be defined) as an era when Albany Democrats went ahead and spent the roof off the state Capitol. It's been alarming. It's been out of control. It's been irresponsible. Their outrageous growth in spending alone is larger than the entire budgets of 35 states. This year's total budget is larger than the combined budgets of Texas and Florida (each of which has more population than New York State) and it spends more than 1 1/2 times per capita than California (which is twice the population of New York State).

There has been zero restraint on their part and the bill will come due sooner, not later. The alarming fact is that spending restraint wouldn't even cut it now in the face of all that Albany Democrats have set in motion including a migrant crisis, the cost of far-reaching energy mandates, a multi-billion-dollar Unemployment Insurance debt, rising Medicaid costs, and all the other new and ever-growing spending commitments they've locked us into.

New York State taxpayers today and long into the future already face trying to afford, live, and work under, as I've said, one of the most bloated and wasteful governments in America. To afford it, Albany Democrats will go on squeezing every penny they possibly can from state and local taxpayers through higher taxes, passing the buck to localities, ignoring badly needed priorities, more borrowing, raiding reserve funds, increasing fees, and every other anti-taxpayer, anti-business, anti-economic opportunity, anti-economic growth, anti-freedom action that will be the cornerstone of every future state budget for as long as New York remains under one-party, all-Democrat control.

And it still won't be enough.

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