



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of December 30, 2024 -- 'Will there finally be a redirection of New York's priorities?'

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 30, 2024

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

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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, **"Will there finally be a redirection of New York's priorities?"**

In the earliest days of the upcoming 2025 legislative session, the spotlight will be squarely on Governor Kathy Hochul while she begins setting the stage for a new year in state government.

Beginning with her State of the State message to the Legislature on January 14th and continuing with the unveiling of her proposed 2025-2026 state budget shortly thereafter, it will be up to Governor Hochul to show in what direction she intends to lead this state throughout the coming year.

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.

We 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;

--finally addressing an illegal migrant crisis that has already cost state taxpayers billions of dollars and continues to place an extreme and unfair burden on local government programs and services, threatens safety and security in far too many communities, and heightens the already widespread belief that New York is a state in free fall and decline;

--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 mandates and 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 continues to prevent a full and robust post-COVID recovery of the state and local economies;

--refusing to take any actions that add to the burden or otherwise jeopardize the future of New York's family farms;

--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 over and over throughout the past few years and I'll say it again now on the doorstep of the beginning of 2025: New Yorkers across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, throughout Upstate New York, and statewide, are worried about making ends meet. For far too long now, they have watched this state become less safe, less affordable, less free, less economically competitive, less responsible, and certainly far less hopeful for the future.

They see the Albany Democrat direction for this state's future 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. She must be unequivocally committed to rebuilding stronger and safer communities, and working toward a more responsible and sustainable future for middle-class communities, families, workers, small businesses, manufacturers and other industries, farmers, and taxpayers. Will she lead the way on an agenda in pursuit of these priorities?

We're about to find out.

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