



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of April 7, 2025 -- 'A state budget holdup ignoring key discussions'

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 7, 2025

| ISSUE: **2025-2026 STATE BUDGET**



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

And no discussions over the number one question that all New Yorkers should be asking: Can New York taxpayers ever afford the rate of spending that has defined state government over the past six years under one-party, all-majority control?

# Weekly Column from

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

**for the week of April 7, 2025**

**“A state budget holdup ignoring key discussions”**

Albany's leaders left the Capitol late last week after shrugging off the enactment of a new state budget that's already a week late.

The holdup remains over several public policy discussions, including discovery reform, involuntary commitment of the severe mentally ill, and maybe a few others. In other words, non-budget policy discussions.

Not the desperately needed economic and fiscal discussions that should be dominating this budget process.

No discussions over high taxes, even though New York remains one of the overall highest-taxed states in America. Upstate United had this to say in a recent statement: “According to a newly released study from WalletHub, New York is ranked at the top of the list for having the highest individual income tax burden, second highest overall tax burden, fourth highest in property tax burden and twenty second in sales and excise tax burden. While it may not come as much of a surprise to many New Yorkers that we are saddled with some of the highest taxes in the country, providing relief or prioritizing affordability continues to be more of a talking point than an action item for policymakers in Albany. Ironically, this analysis comes to us at the same time legislative leaders are in the process of negotiating a record-high state spending plan that is likely to exceed \$250 billion.”

No discussions over the ever-exploding costs of Medicaid and how to get it under control. From a recent Empire Center analysis and commentary: “Governor Hochul's executive budget calls for the state share of Medicaid to increase by \$6.4 billion or 17 percent – continuing a steep upward trend that she herself has called ‘unsustainable.’ That assessment is hard to dispute. If the governor's budget is approved as written – with no additions by the Legislature – state Medicaid outlays in fiscal 2026 will rise to \$44 billion, which is 60 percent larger than the \$28 billion level she inherited just three years ago.” Despite this alarming growth, approximately three times the average rate of the previous ten years, the Empire Center concludes that the governor's current plan for Medicaid moving forward “mainly just pumps more of the taxpayers' money

No discussions over effectively addressing a staffing and safety crisis within state prisons following the strike-related firing of over 2,000 corrections officers. Instead of serious thinking about how to address this staffing shortage and the ongoing deterioration of prison safety, the sole answer from the Hochul administration so far is to call in the National Guard, untrained for this purpose and at exorbitant cost, estimated to be four to five times more than the actual cost for corrections officers, and to begin implementing an accelerated early release plan to set more prisoners free.

And no discussions over the number one question that all New Yorkers should be asking: Can New York taxpayers ever afford the rate of spending that has defined state government over the past six years under one-party, all-██████████ majority control?

Because that's where we're headed again. That's the fundamental question that keeps getting ignored.

These ██████████ majorities are the biggest spenders in state history. If they enact the spending plan everyone expects they're going to approve when they get around to it this year, since 2019 they will have increased spending by approximately *\$90 billion*. By their own admission, it will result in a string of state budget deficits over the next three fiscal years totaling \$6.5 billion in 2027, \$9.8 billion in 2028, and \$11 billion in 2029.

In other words, they're more than willing to keep on spending money that's not there.

Fundamentally -- and from any perspective at all of common sense -- it's reckless. It's out of control. It directs billions upon billions of taxpayer dollars to what many consider to be misguided, politically driven, and even frivolous actions and handouts.

And to pay for it, again by their own admission, they go in search of a new or higher tax, the next fee, and other fiscal irresponsibility.

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