



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Senate Republicans Call On Comptroller DiNapoli To Reject Democrats Creation Of A Legal Defense Slush Fund For Elected Officials

ROBERT G. ORTT May 14, 2025

| ISSUE: **2025-2026 STATE BUDGET**, **GOVERNMENT SPENDING**, **AFFORDABILITY**, **CORRUPTION**



(ALBANY, NY) - On the heels of New York State Democrats passing a budget that includes \$254 billion in spending, Democrats tucked away 10 million taxpayer dollars into a slush fund to cover the private legal bills for politicians in Albany. The Senate Republican conference **penned a letter** to State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli urging him to protect taxpayers of the State by refusing to issue payments from the slush fund.

The letter states, "We write to express our strong opposition to the \$10 million appropriation included in the 2025-26 State Operations Budget Bill, which would allow taxpayer funds to be used for payment or reimbursement of attorneys' fees and related expenses for state employees involved in federal investigations unrelated to their official duties."

"Democrats in New York aren't fooling anybody. Creating a slush fund for the private legal defense of elected officials or public employees for alleged crimes unrelated to their public duties is beyond the pale. We are calling this out for what it is - a gross misuse of taxpayer dollars. Our letter is asking the State Comptroller to step in and do what is right because I can assure you New Yorkers will not forget this" **stated Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt.**

"In yet another slap in the face of hard-working New Yorkers, Governor Hochul and New York democrats are going to use your money to pay for lawyers to represent themselves when they commit crimes. "Government by and for the people" is sadly being replaced by "government for the government" in New York," **stated Senate Deputy Leader Andrew Lanza.**

"In a long line of irresponsible actions coming out of Albany, this one takes irresponsibility to a new level. New York State taxpayers are already the most overburdened taxpayers in America and now Albany Democrats want to give elected officials a new multi-million-dollar, taxpayer-funded slush fund to cover private legal expenses. The State Comptroller should immediately reject any use of it," **stated Senator Tom O'Mara, ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee.**

"My constituents elected me because they believe in good government. This policy doesn't reflect that principle. I cannot, in good conscience, support a measure that allows taxpayer dollars to be used for elected officials' private legal expenses. Frankly, it's baffling that anyone thinks this is a good idea," **stated Senator Bill Weber, ranking member of the Senate Budget and Revenue Committee.**

"The appropriation's language opens the door to ongoing, unchecked public spending on private legal matters that have no connection to state employment. Such an arrangement is not only offensive to the principles of public accountability but may also raise serious constitutional

concerns.

The appropriation explicitly states: *“Attorneys’ fees and expenses shall be paid by the State to the employee or the employee’s private counsel from time to time during the pendency of the Process and upon the audit and warrant of the Comptroller.”*

We urge you, in the strongest terms, to refuse to warrant any payments under this appropriation.

Upholding the integrity of our state government and the responsible use of taxpayer dollars demands no less. As someone once said, no one is above the law,” **concluded the letter.**

Democrats in New York continue to use taxpayers as piggybank to save their skin. Creating a legal slush fund only for the benefit of Albany politicians is an abuse. Hardworking taxpayers want their tax dollars spent on essential government services, not on politicians’ legal fees. This is Albany corruption at its worst, giving political insiders a blank check while working families foot the bill.