



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of May 19, 2025 -- 'New state budget not guided by affordability'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 19, 2025

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



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

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# Weekly Column from

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

**for the week of May 19, 2025**

**“New state budget not guided by affordability”**

Albany [REDACTED] majorities across the board started this year seemingly guided by one priority: affordability.

At least that was the constant word coming out of the Capitol in January and if statewide polling and national rankings were any guideposts, it's easy to understand why. New Yorkers were – and still are -- overwhelmingly concerned about making ends meet, and New York was –and still is --holding its position as one of America's least affordable states.

Five months down the road from January and if you didn't know better, you'd think all that Albany [REDACTED] majority concern about affordability just disappeared into thin air.

I've spent the past few weeks in this column highlighting the fact that the final 2025-2026 state budget is anything but affordable. It totals at least \$254 billion, increasing state spending by about \$15 billion over last year. Above all, it continues the out-of-control state spending increases that have totaled upwards of \$85 billion over the past seven years. That's nearly a 50% increase in the overall state budget in just seven years, which is the period that the Albany [REDACTED] majorities have held one-party control of all of state government. By contrast, the prior seven-year period when we had a [REDACTED] majority in the state Senate, the annual budget increases were in the two to three percent range.

As many of us have said many times, it ignores the economic and fiscal warnings on the horizon and keeps on increasing government spending like there's no tomorrow.

Among others, the state comptroller shares the concern. Of the state's new spending plan, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli writes, "The budget includes significant state-funded increases...and authorizes an additional \$23 billion in public authority backdoor borrowing. General aid for local governments is largely flat, despite growing signs of fiscal strain at the local level...The time to develop a strategy and structural reforms is before a crisis, yet this budget includes no serious cost containment measures... In these uncertain and disruptive times, the Legislature gave extraordinary powers to the Executive to make mid-year spending cuts in the event of budget imbalance...close monitoring will be needed to ensure that the state is on a sustainable path and able to navigate the challenges ahead."

Not exactly a ringing endorsement of where the state is headed.

Consequently, it remains worthwhile to keep up the warnings. That includes continued red flags about the Albany [REDACTED] majority climate agenda. It remains a brewing perfect storm of unaffordability and it keeps moving forward in the newly enacted state budget.

beginning in 2027. That's a move in the right direction but it doesn't erase the concern for districts and local taxpayers that the mandate looms as an enormous cost.

Keep in mind that the all-electric school bus mandate is just one of numerous energy mandates already in the state's pipeline and on the way to hit all New Yorkers extremely hard in the very near future, including:

- No natural gas within newly constructed buildings, beginning in 2025;
- No new gas service to existing buildings, beginning in 2030;
- No replacement natural gas appliances for home heating, cooking, water heating, clothes drying beginning in 2035; and
- No gasoline-automobile sales by 2035.

The overriding point for the state Senate and Assembly [REDACTED] minority conferences, and all those who have been warning about these mandates, is not that we don't believe New York State should be moving toward cleaner and more renewable energy, because that's simply not the truth. We do believe it and we have supported actions that already make New York State a national leader.

Our warnings have focused on whether, under current timelines, Albany's climate agenda is responsible or rational. We believe it lacks critical foresight and a thorough, transparent cost-benefit analysis. We believe it unreasonably risks energy grid reliability and affordability.

At the very least, it demands reassessment and reexamination before it's too late.

The Empire Center has warned that the costs to New Yorkers could well prove to be over \$1 trillion by 2050.

Consequently, as we move into the final weeks of the current legislative session, we can't afford to let affordability fly under the radar of public attention and scrutiny.

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