



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## New State Budget Includes Some Positives, But Spends Too Much

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Earlier this month, the State Legislature adopted, and the governor signed a \$254 billion dollar budget which funds important state programs and provides modest tax relief for residents. However, it also dramatically increases spending, makes New York less affordable, and does little to improve public safety.

The final votes came more than 5 weeks after the April first deadline, making this the latest budget in recent memory and raising more concern about the budget process, which lacks transparency and public input.

On the positive side, I am pleased that the budget includes vital funding for both education and transportation. A long-overdue change in the formula used to calculate school aid means a minimum, two percent increase in foundation aid for all districts. It also includes an additional \$800 million for the Department of Transportation's 5-year capital plan to support highway and bridge construction projects. The budget also cuts middle class income taxes, increases the child tax credit, and closes the unemployment insurance deficit, which benefits both businesses and employees.

I am concerned, however, about the \$12 billion in new spending compared to last year. With this new budget, spending has now increased by \$84 billion in just 7 years while our population has remained mostly flat. Taxpayers cannot afford these unsustainable increases. New York is already among the most expensive places to live and raise a family. This budget does not do enough to ease the day-to-day financial burden residents face. It also fails to plan for potential cuts in federal funding, which could lead to larger outyear budget gaps.

The spending plan also advances the state's costly climate mandates. Protecting our environment is important, but we must develop a more realistic and affordable clean energy plan that does not limit consumer choice or lead to increased utility costs. Residents and businesses cannot afford such harsh mandates associated with unachievable goals.

I am also disappointed that efforts to fix recent changes to our criminal justice laws fell short of what is needed to better ensure public safety and to protect the rights of law-abiding citizens. Proposed changes to the state's discovery laws and a measure to crack down on individuals who use a mask to conceal their identity in the commission of a crime were watered down. Initiatives to repeal the state's disastrous cashless bail laws and to strengthen laws against drugged driving were rejected outright. Further, the budget allows for the closing of up to three state correctional facilities and does not do enough to address the crisis

inside our prisons.

In the end, I voted against this budget because as a package it spends too much and contains too many misguided programs. It does not adequately address the many challenges we face, does not enhance our quality of life and does nothing to stop the exodus of families, seniors, and young people from our state. Going forward, I will continue to fight for responsible spending and common-sense initiatives that will make New York more affordable, safer, and stronger.