



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Consumer Outreach Won't Foot the Bill

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ONEONTA, 04/09/09 -- Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today criticized Governor David Paterson for announcing an outreach program for consumers who can't pay their energy bills, just days after pushing through a massive utility tax hike that will make it even tougher for people to pay them.

"Offering middle class families and businesses a website and a 1-800 phone number won't help them pay their rising utility bills," said Senator Seward. "The state budget, crafted by Governor Paterson and his Democrat colleagues, increased taxes on electricity and natural gas by more than \$600 million, a move that will raise the energy bills of every consumer and cost thousands of jobs. Now the governor wants those people who will no longer be able to pay the bill to know their legal rights."

New Yorkers already pay some of the highest energy costs in the nation; now the new utility tax will cost the average resident hundreds of dollars a year. A small manufacturer with a \$10,000 electrical bill will see his assessment go from \$333 to \$2,000 a year. The higher tax will likely lead to more businesses closing their doors and leaving New York for other states.

Senate Republicans proposed a budget amendment to strike the disastrous utility tax from the budget, but senate Democrats voted against it unanimously, and stood with the governor in support of the tax hike.

The new state budget increases taxes by a total of more than \$8 billion and will increase the taxes paid by an average family of four by \$2,400 a year. This includes the decision by the governor and the senate and assembly Democrats to eliminate the STAR property tax rebate checks.

“Perhaps the governor will announce another outreach program for people who are going to lose their homes because they can no longer afford their property taxes,” Seward added. “We need to move forward and institute real reforms that lower property taxes and jump start our upstate economy.”