



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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A Brighter Future: The 51st State

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO January 14, 2010

New York State is currently in the midst of its worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Double digit unemployment, unbearable taxes and declining business investment have been driving residents out of New York State in record numbers. Upstate New York has lost more residents than any other region in the United States and the exodus of our young people has been alarming.

The worst part about this disappointing trend is that we Upstate New Yorkers have had little say in our fate, as the New York City-driven legislature and executive office has been dictating State policy for decades. The distinct political and social needs of Upstate have been virtually ignored in favor of policies that strictly favor New York City. Now every New York State Legislative leader is from New York City, including the Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller and all other leaders in New York State government.

That is why I have long believed that a separate Upstate New York, creating the 51st State, would allow our region to shed the detrimental laws, regulations and taxes that inhibit development so that we can re-emerge as a leader in job growth and economic opportunity, encouraging our young people to work, live and raise their families here rather than another state.

Recently, I cosponsored legislation (S3526) that would place a simple question on the ballot during our next State elections: "Do you support the division of New York into two separate states?" This question will give the people of New York the opportunity to voice their concerns with the direction of our State and show their support for this important initiative.

In the last several decades, Upstate New York has seen growth in only one sector of the economy- the public sector. Manufacturing, agriculture and even retail jobs have been fleeing the region in droves. Many have simply been taxed out of business while the State government continues to grow out of control. The 2009-2010 State budget, which I cast my adamant vote against, only perpetuated the problem by levying more than \$8.5 billion in new taxes and increased spending by \$13 billion. No state or nation has ever been able to succeed with the public sector being the primary driver of their economy.

The level of fiscal irresponsibility was astonishing in this last budget and clearly displayed the tax and spend attitude that dominates Downstate politics. Increased motor vehicle taxes and larger fees on hunting and fishing licenses were prominent examples of taxes that disproportionately impacted Upstate residents.

Even the 2% assessment on energy impacted our region harder as manufacturers in Upstate, who tend to consume the most energy, could not afford an increase in their utility costs. These taxes have been the last straw for so many of our residents.

Meanwhile, on top of the exorbitant taxes, New York City-driven regulations and laws continue to devastate Upstate New York. New York State has the largest and least cost-effective Medicaid program in the country, constantly being supported and driven higher by Downstate legislators whose constituents do not have to worry about local property taxes the way Upstate residents do because many simply do not own property and their counties are more densely populated. As a result, our property tax burdens in Upstate are among the

highest in the Nation, making our region unattractive for potential businesses.

Upstate New York has long taken a backseat to Downstate interests. It is time that we finally stand up and say enough is enough. It is unacceptable to allow Downstate legislators to balance their spending sprees on the backs of our Upstate taxpayers. It is time to let you decide how our State moves forward and give Upstate the opportunity to become the 51st State.