



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Winner: What about Empire Zone Program?

GEORGE WINNER June 10, 2010

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Albany, N.Y., June 10—With New York's No. 1 economic development tool for upstate businesses and communities set to expire less than three weeks from now, State Senator George Winner (R-C-I, Elmira) kept up the call today for Governor Paterson and legislative leaders to pay closer attention to the future of the Empire Zone economic development program.

He noted that the future of the state's 82 empire zones wasn't even mentioned in a meeting between Paterson and legislative leaders yesterday in Albany.

"New York's leaders keep sending the wrong message by failing to put the future of the upstate economy on the list of the most important issues facing our communities," said Winner. "Continued inaction has the potential to shove a lot of upstate jobs out the door."

Winner said that enacting a 2010-2011 state budget that fails to address the future of the Empire Zone program could lead to thousands of upstate job losses, including many in the Southern Tier.

Similar concerns and uncertainties are already being felt by upstate employers dependent on the state's low-cost economic development power programs, which expired in mid-May and have been extended on a piecemeal basis since then.

Under the provisions of last year's state budget, the Empire Zone program is set to expire on June 30, 2010. The fate of many of the program's key incentives hinges on yet-to-be-determined legislative action.

Winner said that while negotiations between the governor and legislative leaders were supposed to take place well before June 30th on how best to replace the Empire Zone program, there's been very little public discussion on where those negotiations stand, their success is far from guaranteed given the leaders' inability to settle differences on the state's overall financial plan, and, in the interim, local economic development leaders are left with no long-term economic certainty to offer potential employers interested in expanding or relocating to the region.

"What happens on June 30th? Our communities, employers, and workers need to know. That's just common economic sense," said Winner.

