



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Credit Where It's Due

GEORGE WINNER October 4, 2010

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First and foremost, I'll take this chance to tip my own hat to one of our region's most distinguished and most influential citizens, James R. Houghton, former chairman and CEO of Corning Incorporated. Late last week at its annual meeting, the Business Council of New York honored him with its 2010 "Corning Award for Excellence."

This prestigious tribute is given annually to a New Yorker who has demonstrated "outstanding accomplishment and a deep and sustained commitment to the people of New

York.” For the people of Corning and all of the Southern Tier, that gets right to the heart of what James Houghton and the Houghton family has meant and given to our region – a deep and sustained commitment.

“Jamie Houghton is one of the best business and civic leaders in New York. Over the years he has given a great deal to The Business Council and other institutions that are part of the fabric of our state. He has been a leader for the business community and a champion for the arts and cultural life of New York,” said Kenneth Adams, president and CEO of The Business Council.

Of course it was another member of the Houghton family, former Corning chairman and Congressman Amo Houghton, who founded the Business Council in 1980. And over the past three decades, the Council has emerged as strong and leading voice for economic growth and job creation.

So it was a well-earned and well-deserved tribute late last week to the Houghton family, for all that they have done and meant to our region and to all of New York State.

And while we’re on the subject of Business Council advocacy, it’s a good time to highlight the group’s latest campaign called “Five to Survive.”

The past two years in New York government have not been conducive, to say the least, to creating a more business-friendly economic climate, particularly upstate. All-time-high tax increases. Higher state-imposed costs and fees on upstate families for everything from driving their cars to heating their homes. Just last week there was a new report in which nine of the top 10 counties with the highest property taxes in the nation – that’s right, in the nation – are in upstate New York (including Chemung and Steuben).

Many state business leaders point to the fact that every statewide office, from the office of the Governor on down, as well as both houses of the state Legislature, are now under Democratic, mostly New York City-based control as one of the major reasons why. In other words, there are no checks and balances in the current makeup of New York government.

One of these leaders, Michael Elmendorf, who heads the New York State chapter of the well-respected National Federation of Independent Business, may have best summed up the business community's feeling on the results of this two-year experiment in one-party control of state government when he said in a recent interview, "It's been a sea change. There was just a slew of anti-economy, anti-job legislation that passed, in many cases by just one vote. Just having one more pro-business vote in the Senate would have made a difference."

In response, then, the Business Council has launched "Five to Survive" to rally support for the following actions – and the legislators who will support them – in the 2011 legislative session:

- 1.) Cap property taxes, and accompany that action with state mandate relief;
- 2.) Cap state spending;
- 3.) Reduce the tax burden;
- 4.) Reform public employee pensions for newly hired employees; and
- 5.) Limit government borrowing.

It's timely, good food for thought and anyone who's interested can find out more at:

www.enoughalreadyny.org.