



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Winner

Some Final Thoughts

GEORGE WINNER December 27, 2010

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It has been an enormous privilege over the past six years that I've represented this region in the New York State Senate to have the opportunity, through this website, to now and then express a few thoughts, share a few opinions, and offer my own perspective on so many of the key issues of the day.

But as many of you know, I'm winding down 32 years as a New York State legislator. I'll be retiring at the end of this week. So this will be my final web column. For those of you who have faithfully read these words, and then perhaps seen fit to send me a few thoughts of your own (which, by the way, many of you have), I simply want to say thank you.

I began this work way back in 1971, as hard as that is to believe, even for me. That's right, I first started work in New York State government as a counsel to then-Senator Bill "Cadillac" Smith. I ran for the state Assembly myself in 1978, was elected and then re-elected for another 12 consecutive terms – 26 years in all. This legislative career came full circle in 2004, when I was elected to the Senate and returned to the chamber where it all began.

In other words, the Legislature has been my life's work. It seems like I've spent a lifetime at the Capitol, on the floor of both the Assembly and Senate, standing up and speaking out for our region and for all of upstate New York. I guess I have. It's a commitment that I wouldn't hesitate to give all over again.

So these final days in public office, as I'm sure you can imagine, arrive with a great deal of reflection. You travel around a region that you've represented across the past four decades, and it's chock full of reminders. Reminders of victories and, yes, things that weren't accomplished. Reminders of so many initiatives to strengthen the economy and key industries like agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. Reminders of community projects to build roads and bridges, improve schools, keep our communities safe, and address countless other concerns and needs.

Yes, these final days in office are overflowing with reminders and a great deal of reflection.

But I can tell you that what I keep recalling most of all are the people who have made such a difference every step of the way – not just for me, but for all of our communities and

families.

I've said it repeatedly and it seems fitting to repeat it as one final thought: this region's greatest strength is built on the work of the men and women who, year after year, decade after decade, remain committed to identifying common goals, building on strengths, and developing strategies to shore up weaknesses.

When I announced back in June that I wouldn't be seeking re-election, I said, "The most hopeful asset this region produces is communities that never give up, never back down, and know what it takes to weather the storms. I've done my best to represent this fighting spirit."

If I could leave all of you with just one recollection, that wouldn't be a bad one to choose.

I've been enormously proud and fortunate to be able to do anything and everything possible to support this region. I'm especially proud of the state-local partnerships we've developed over the years, and I believe we've established valuable, productive partnerships that will continue to keep our communities moving forward and provide the foundation for a solid future.

That's my greatest hope, as well as my greatest satisfaction. We've always found a way, even during the most uncertain and trying of times. I will forever be proud of that perseverance, and I will always be grateful to all of you for the chance to see it through.

Thank you. It's been an enormous privilege to represent you.