



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Legislature reaches first agreement on state budget, will hold public negotiating sessions

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 11, 2011

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Albany, N.Y., February 11—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) welcomed a legislative agreement that will ensure the 2011-2012 state budget adoption process includes the use of joint, bipartisan Senate-Assembly budget conference committees.

Under the conference committee process, various segments of the state budget are debated by committees made up of individual senators and assembly members, on a bipartisan basis, who meet in public to settle differences and negotiate compromises.

O'Mara and many other legislators were highly critical in 2009 and last year when the Legislature's Democratic majorities ignored key elements of the state's Budget Reform Act of 2007, which established legal guidelines and timetables for the appointment of joint legislative budget conference committees to conduct public budget negotiations.

O'Mara welcomed the restoration of the process.

“There was a lack of public scrutiny and public understanding during state budget negotiations over the past two years, and it helped produce bad, unsustainable tax-and-spend budgets,” said O’Mara. “The conference committee process forces individual legislators to stand up and defend their positions in public. It gives us the best chance for an on-time budget. It’s good government, and it should be part of each and every budget adoption. It’s especially important this year when we’re facing so many deep-rooted and substantive changes.”

Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver announced the agreement yesterday. Details of the agreed-upon legislative timetable include:

- > the release of Senate/Assembly Fiscal Committee Economic & Revenue reports on or before February 28th;
- > the adoption of Senate and Assembly budget resolutions on or before March 15th, immediately followed by the beginning of the joint budget conference committee process; and
- > on or before March 28th, the release of the joint conference committees’ final reports followed by action on a final state budget by April 1st.