



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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As I complete my second month serving the people of the 7th Senate District, I am continuously reminded that these are interesting times in New York State. There are discussions going on in Albany about subjects that are now getting the serious attention they deserve. Mandate relief, for example, is something we need to discuss in the coming months, especially in light of the likelihood that a 2 percent tax cap will be implemented.

On Thursday, February 17, we had the opportunity to hear testimony from a wide range of stakeholders in our local communities, from our board of education members and school superintendents to our village mayors at a hearing on mandate relief, entitled “The True Path to Reducing New York’s Real Property Tax Burden: Mandate Relief and Tax Caps,” chaired by Senator John Flanagan and myself. I would like to thank all of those who took time out of their busy schedules to testify.

It is clear that many local governments and schools districts are facing difficult fiscal situations. Some of the pressures on local government and school district budgets are tied to mandated costs.

As Peter Baynes, executive director of the New York Conference of Mayors, testified, the pension and healthcare costs are projected to outgrow the rate of property tax levies allowed under the tax cap. This further highlights the critical need for mandate relief.

As I have stated since the tax cap was passed with bi-partisan support in the Senate, it is an important first step in reducing the tax burden but it has to be tied directly to mandate relief. With the implementation of the tax cap being a strong possibility, our local governments and school districts must be given the ability to meet the cap and thus provide our taxpayers real relief.

It is incumbent upon us to look into providing relief from some of the mandates that forcing local governments and school districts to pass certain costs onto the taxpayers. In the months ahead, we will be discussing mandate relief in Albany and I certainly will take the comments and suggestions that were stated at the February 17 hearing under strong consideration.

The state's budget will also continue to be debated. While I recognize the need for cuts in spending and applaud the Governor for agreeing that taxing your way out of a recession is not the answer, I want to make sure, along with my Long Island colleagues, that the budget is not being balanced on the backs of our residents.

These are indeed interesting times that require us to partner with our communities to look at ways to solve our fiscal problems. I am certain that the days of business as usual in Albany are over. It is time to implement effective solutions and I look forward to discussing the issues with our communities in the months to come.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve.