



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

20 Senators Join Senator Rivera in a Letter Urging Governor Cuomo to Extend Personal Income Tax for Wealthiest New Yorkers

GUSTAVO RIVERA March 3, 2011

| ISSUE: **INCOME TAX**

New York, NY – Senator Gustavo Rivera was joined by 20 Senators yesterday afternoon in co-signing a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo, urging him to maintain the personal income tax level for the wealthiest New Yorkers to ensure Middle Class and low-income New Yorkers do not bear the sole burden of the shared sacrifice necessary to get us through these difficult times.

In the letter, Senators voice their concern over cuts to education, Medicaid and public safety that would disproportionately impact our most vulnerable citizens in low and middle-income communities and communities of color.

“A majority of Democratic Senators joined me in signing this letter in order to share their concerns over tough budget cuts and a budget proposal that would disproportionately impact many of our own communities,” said Senator Rivera. “But most importantly, we are presenting solutions and hoping to start a dialogue regarding the extension of personal income tax for the wealthiest New Yorkers. Our communities understand that we are making tough choices in this budget, but we must ask all New Yorkers to share the responsibility and the burden of closing the deficit.”

The letter was signed by Senators Gustavo Rivera, Eric Adams, Joseph Addabbo, Tony Avella, Neil Breslin, Martin Dilan, Ruben Diaz Sr., Thomas Duane, Adriano Espaillat, Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Shirley Huntley, Liz Krueger, Velmanette Montgomery, Suzi Oppenheimer, Kevin Parker, Jose Peralta, Bill Perkins, Toby Ann Stavisky, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Jose Serrano and Daniel Squadron.

The letter is attached and the text of the letter is below:

March 2nd, 2011

Governor Andrew Cuomo

New York State Capitol

Second Floor

Albany, NY 12247

Dear Governor Cuomo:

In your budget presentation on February 1st, you urged the State Legislature to join you in making tough decisions. We are prepared to do just that. And we join you in wanting to

provide New Yorkers with a more efficient, effective and streamlined government. We know this year's budget will require a heavy dose of sacrifice and a heavy dose of responsibility. However, we write you today to urge that the sacrifice and responsibility be shared across the state.

As we continue to hold public hearings on the impact of the proposed budget cuts, it has become clear to us, particularly in the areas of education, health and public safety, a disproportionate burden will be placed on low-income communities and communities of color. While these cuts are being touted as a path to recovery, to many of our constituents these cuts could easily be a path to ruin with hospitals closing, classes becoming overcrowded, and streets becoming less safe.

This is a path we do not have to take. Instead, we ask that this year's budget reflect shared sacrifice and shared responsibility for all New Yorkers. That is why we are writing to request your support for keeping in place the personal income tax (PIT) at current levels.

As you said in your budget presentation, we will not be able to cut our way out of this budget crisis. We must also ensure higher revenue for the state to offset what will otherwise be damaging budget cuts for our districts and those who have sent us to Albany to represent their interests. If we just keep the PIT rate where it is for those wealthiest New Yorkers, it would provide more than \$1 billion in revenue this fiscal year and up to \$5 billion in fiscal year 2012-2013.

Those revenues should be used to offset the hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts proposed to education (including CUNY and SUNY), public health, human services, mental hygiene, and public safety.

We have heard from our constituents. Those who would be impacted the most – students, low-income families and teachers – were not the cause of the economic crisis but will be the ones to bear the brunt of it. Those hit hardest by the proposed budget and the economic crisis will once again do their part and make sacrifices. But they look at this budget and wonder why it is those at the top aren't being asked to do the same. In fact, the only change for highest income earners is they receive relief in the form of a TAX CUT. This comes at a time when New York's low-income earners are paying more than ever before in personal income tax, while the wealthiest New Yorkers pay less than they ever have in personal income tax.

Given the fact that the federal government extended the Bush-era high-income tax cuts, it's fair to question whether we should be giving the wealthiest New Yorkers a state tax cut too. During these difficult financial times sacrifices must be shared by all. Should wealthy New Yorkers really receive two tax cuts?

We would have far preferred that the federal government done the right thing with tax policy. But it did not and as a result all the states (most of which are in equally bad shape for revenue) are left with the reality that they will not see much-needed revenues from Washington for at least the next two years.

Keeping taxes for the wealthiest New Yorkers at their current level will lessen the cuts to critical services like education, Medicaid and public safety funding that impact people like the residents of our districts. This is an essential first step in keeping with the ideal of a budget that truly shared sacrifice and shared responsibility.

We hope you will consider supporting our proposal and look forward to working with you as we continue to discuss this budget process. Please let us know when we can discuss this project further and set a meeting at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Hon. Gustavo Rivera

Hon. Eric Adams

Hon. Joseph Addabbo

Hon. Tony Avella

Hon. Neil Breslin

Hon. Martin Dilan

Hon. Ruben Diaz Sr.

Hon. Thomas Duane

Hon. Adriano Espaillat

Hon. Ruth Hassell-Thompson

Hon. Shirley Huntley

Hon. Liz Krueger

Hon. Velmanette Montgomery

Hon. Suzi Oppenheimer

Hon. Kevin Parker

Hon. Jose Peralta

Hon. Bill Perkins

Hon. Toby Ann Stavisky

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Hon. Jose Serrano

Hon. Daniel Squadron

