



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins: We Need Immediate Mandate Relief

JACK M. MARTINS March 7, 2011

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It has been a busy week in Albany. We continue the process of examining the state budget. These are difficult financial times but working together, we will ultimately succeed in cutting expenses and providing a framework for real long-term relief. In order for us to improve our state's fiscal health, we need to provide residents with property tax relief, create jobs and control spending.

The State Senate passed a 2 percent tax levy cap. However, a major component of property tax relief is our ability to address state mandates that are passed on to school districts and local governments. On March 1, the Governor's Mandate Relief Redesign Team issued its preliminary report -- it can be found at <http://www.governor.ny.gov/mandaterelief>. Among the suggestions were creating a new pension tier to deal with escalating pension costs as well as prohibiting any new unfunded mandates on school districts and local governments. The suggestions will bring about relief in the long term -- decades, not years.

I was disappointed that this initial report did not include a significant portion of the immediate mandate relief that we were all looking for. On February 17th, as Chairman of the Senate's Committee on Local Governments, I hosted a hearing entitled, "The Path to

Reducing New York's Real Property Tax Burden: Mandate Relief and Tax Caps."

During the hearing, we heard suggestions through testimony from various stake holders including representatives from various associations, school superintendents, village mayors and representatives from labor. All stressed the need for some immediate measures that could be taken to offer real tax relief now.

I believe that the only way to realistically achieve a long term, meaningful reduction of the real property tax burden placed on our residents and businesses is to establish a comprehensive approach which would both cap the rate of growth of real property taxes and provide significant mandate relief for local governments. The tax cap and mandate relief go together.

I had hoped that the Task Force's report would have included further ways to provide immediate mandate relief, that the report would include suggestions for real mandate relief in the short term and long term as we move forward. The short term impact of our current economic crisis requires that we provide short-term relief as we strive for long term relief.

The executive order that created the Governor's Mandate Relief Team states that property tax levies in New York grew by 73 percent from 1998 to 2008. We all know that Nassau County has been hit particularly hard when it comes to property taxes. The high property taxes we have now did not come overnight. However, we need to act now to begin to provide the relief we desperately need. We were elected during these difficult economic times to be bold and nowhere is the need greater than in dealing with the cost drivers pushing property taxes ever higher.

When not in Albany, I continue to meet with the stakeholders from the 7th Senate District that make our communities such a special place to live and work. I am continually grateful for the generosity, commitment and hard work shown by our residents. As always, thank

you for the opportunity to serve.