



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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I often say that many elected officials in Albany look at the state from 30,000 feet. They see the quilt pattern of the various terrains, they see communities, but they don't see people. Much the same way, many of these same elected officials oftentimes make decisions without having an understanding as to how the decisions will impact people directly. I don't believe that there is any sinister motive, just a lack of perspective and understanding.

As a father and husband, as a businessman, and as a former local mayor, my perspective is somewhat different. I have seen first-hand how decisions made in Albany can impact our counties, towns, villages and schools as well as our residents and businesses here in our Long Island communities. I have seen how state mandates oftentimes add layers of unnecessary and wasteful spending that our local governments would like to be rid of, but can't.

Perhaps there is no place where this is more evident than with the state's budget.

In the coming days and weeks, we will continue to analyze the Governor's proposed budget. I agree with the Governor that in these economic times we cannot increase state spending. We must break our state's historic reliance on borrowing and live within our means. Our legacy to our children must not be more and more unpaid debt. Most importantly, we must pursue

options to not only limit the increase of local property taxes, but also options that will allow our local schools, counties, towns and villages to actually reduce spending.

Difficult times call for difficult decisions. I appreciate the difficulty of the Governor's proposed budget especially in light of the cuts contained therein, but, when cutting, the budget must prioritize between different programs and their impact to our residents on the ground. Broad stroke budget cuts oftentimes lack the precision necessary to protect those individuals who are most at risk in our communities -- special needs individuals, senior citizens, handicapped. We must endeavor to protect those who are unable to help themselves.

Whether it is the Governor's proposed cuts to 4201 schools servicing the needs of deaf, blind, and severely disabled children in our communities (i.e. Henry Viscardi School and Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf); proposed cuts to home health care services; or proposed cuts to services for the disabled, we must continue to provide these services. Clearly, the cost, short term and long term, monetary and otherwise, of abandoning these programs is unacceptable.

If we turn our backs on our home health care recipients, will they not merely seek care at our already overburdened hospitals? If we turn our backs on our 4201 schools, will their students not merely return to their individual school districts at increased costs, but with reduced services? If we turn our backs on those caring for our disabled residents, who will care for them and what will become of them?

We will continue to work with the Governor to find efficiencies and cost savings elsewhere. I understand the need for shared sacrifice, but I know we all agree that our state's budget must not be balanced on the backs of those least able to provide for themselves.

Certainly, cuts will be made and the budget will be balanced, just not this way. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate to seek ways to provide immediate relief from state mandates thereby providing funding options for these programs and others.

When it comes to our state budget, we must maintain our perspective -- broad stroke budget cuts must be accompanied by more precise adjustments where necessary to ensure that those most vulnerable among us are not overlooked.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve.