



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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More to Do

I love those local history books that show what our neighborhoods used to be like. I enjoy contrasting photos of wide open spaces, dirt roads and potato farms to where today stand shopping malls, highways, and supermarkets. It's fascinating because this super-development actually didn't begin that long ago. It was only after World War II, when our servicemen settled here with their families that Long Island's population boom began.

We had it all. In close proximity to New York City, the economic engine of the country, there was no shortage of opportunity and you could buy an affordable

home here that was just minutes from parks and beaches. So our grandparents and parents devoted themselves to building excellent school systems, exceptional hospitals, and all the amenities anyone could ask for.

But that changed. What's missing now is the affordability. Did you know that from 2000 to 2010 New York State lost more than 1.6 million residents to other states? Many leave because life here is simply too expensive. Whether it's seniors on fixed incomes, young couples starting out, or people in between who are fed up, sooner or later they realize that life anywhere else seems easier. That's bad economically but worse for families and friends that are impacted. I wish I had a nickel for every grandparent who laments that they're too far from their grandchildren.

This is what we're working to change in Albany. Working with Governor Cuomo we avoided the Albany drama that hindered progress for years and achieved quite a bit this past legislative session. Most important were that we passed an on-time, balanced budget that cut spending and then enacted the long-awaited property tax cap.

However satisfying that is, there's more to do to make New York affordable again. For starters, we'd like to eliminate the MTA Payroll Tax that drains local governments and business of hundreds of millions of dollars each year. The Senate passed a bill to repeal this tax but it was held up in the Assembly. This month, the Long Island Senate delegation will again be calling on them to pass it.

We also have to tackle mandate relief. I'm thrilled to be part of the newly formed Mandate Relief Council which reviews the requests of school districts and local governments. Our goal is to liberate them from the thousands of unfunded and often unnecessary directives that deplete their budgets. Getting control of these is one of the keys to our progress. We have to literally undo years of red tape and bureaucracy that drive our taxes ever higher.

Last but not least we have to address pension reform. The Governor has proposed a new tier for the system that calls for greater contributions from employees. It's a good start but it's not the magic bullet. A serious discussion must be had that fairly balances what employees desire in light of what taxpayers can afford. It won't be easy, nothing worth having ever is. Yet with time and sincere effort we can strike an accord that's fair to everyone.

Those are the three big issues that are next. We must work to make New York affordable for residents and business. It will encourage growth in the economy and create much needed jobs. I ask that you remain as interested and passionate as you have thus far. It builds momentum and gets things done. I will do my best to inform you here and, of course, my office is available to you. As always, it's my pleasure to work as your state senator.