



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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### **Working Towards Government Efficiency**

Government efficiency – for most of us those two words don’t go together. We usually hear about government’s inefficiency. For example, there was the spring report that revealed New York State has an incredible 1,719 vendors that all provide it with pens, paper and paper clips. Or just this past week we heard about Solyndra, the solar panel company that took \$535 million in federally guaranteed loans and then went belly-up. (There will be investigations and noise on Capitol Hill but the money will never be recouped.) Whatever the case, it’s enough to infuriate taxpayers and shake their faith in government but it is also what motivated me to enter public service.

When I was elected Mayor of Mineola, the former administration had relied on borrowing to pay for operating expenses, racking up over \$33 million in debt in the process, the debt service for which took up over 20% of our tax base. We had no reserves and were running deficits in all our departments. Our \$12 million tax base and \$20 million budget was in a downward spiral so I called in the cavalry. Hardworking, everyday taxpayers I knew and trusted came together and we developed a plan that addressed the issues, froze discretionary spending, stopped all borrowing, and reduced debt by over \$11 million while balancing

Mineola's budget for seven years in a row. I cut my teeth on getting inefficiency under control and I think that may be why I was recently appointed to the bi-partisan Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency.

Along with eight of my Senate colleagues, we will work to uncover waste and mismanagement throughout state government. We'll look for overtime abuses, develop new guidelines for contractors, review the use of state assets, and hopefully eliminate duplicative administrative functions to streamline services.

It sounds like a tall order, but let's face it: with a \$130 billion dollar state budget, hundreds of agencies, millions of square feet of office space, and thousands of vendor contracts there's plenty to review. Understandably, that makes those who prefer the status quo nervous. They'll claim it's a waste of time. Yet you know as well as I do that our state's notoriously wasteful practices have been an albatross for far too long.

In these difficult times, the common theme across all levels of government is that every dollar counts. It's the message taxpayers made abundantly clear during the last election and it's what empowered the Senate, along with Governor Cuomo, to balance the budget without raising taxes. However, one successful budget year doesn't necessarily lead to another unless we work at maintaining those sound financial practices. This year promises to be particularly challenging as the pension costs that we are contractually obligated to meet are set to rise by double digits. That means we'll have to work twice as hard at finding economies elsewhere. It won't be easy but it absolutely can be done, assuming my colleagues relish the challenge as much as I do.

That brings me to your role. Our team is charged with finding waste but the support of the Senate, Assembly, and Governor Cuomo is called for to bring change to fruition. So from time to time I will write about what we discover here, put it in the sunlight so to speak, with the hope that your common sense will prevail upon all three. That's when things get done. It

calls for true resolve to undo years of worst practices but it will be the most rewarding thing we do for our state. I hope you'll join me in the effort.