



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Touts Keys For Success For 2012

JAMES L. SEWARD January 12, 2012

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ONEONTA, 01/12/12 – In media conferences across his district kicking off the 2012 session of the New York State Senate, State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) opened up his legislative playbook and detailed his “Keys for Success.” Seward’s game plan focuses on economic development, mandate relief, reform of the education aid formula, and continued flood recovery assistance.

“After a winning 2011, New York is once again a force to be reckoned with. However, there is a great deal of work left to be accomplished before declaring victory,” said Senator Seward. “Just like any sports team that has an early lead, making the right halftime adjustments is the key to victory. In order for New York to come home a winner we need to follow my keys for success.”

Economic Development

New York is once again open for business. The regional economic development council approach, funded through last year’s state budget, produced a number of worthy initiatives. Now it is time to go even further.

“The best and most promising projects are now being recognized and supported through state grants but more must be done to rebuild the economy, particularly in rural, upstate communities. While I strongly support another round of grants, it is even more important that we make New York more business-friendly. In order to attract new companies and assist existing businesses expand, over-regulation has to stop. Government red tape and unnecessary regulations are not the enhancements CEOs look for when deciding to open shop. Businesses need to know that state government is ready to partner with them.”

Senator Seward’s economic development strategy includes:

Substantial regulatory reforms that will allow businesses to expand without over intrusion from government;

Elimination of regulations that are negatively impacting economic development;

Tax credits for job creation with additional incentives to hire currently unemployed workers;

Additional funding for broadband/high-speed internet expansion in rural areas;

Continued funding for agri-business programs.

Mandate Relief

Local governments and school districts are strapped and in many cases are forced to choose between service reductions or property tax increases – neither choice is appealing.

“Last year I was proud to vote in favor of the property tax cap, a long overdue tax relief tool. Unfortunately, without mandate relief, the cap is like a taking the football field with only 10 players. Substantial mandate relief measures are needed so local governments and schools are able to provide essential services and keep property taxes in check.

“Step one is Medicaid reform. Individual counties spend 45-percent of their budgets on their local share. Medicaid is truly the mother of all mandates. I am co-sponsoring legislation calling for a phased-in state takeover that will gradually eliminate the local share paid by counties. This will not only free up local resources but will also lead to improved fraud control.

“With over five-million New Yorkers now enrolled in Medicaid at an overall cost of more than a billion dollars a week, a state takeover of local costs is essential. A phased-in state takeover - gradually eliminating the local share traditionally paid by county governments and funded by property taxes is needed.

“A constitutional amendment is also needed to allow the legislature to eliminate regulations that put an undue financial burden on the state or local governments. The state senate overwhelmingly passed legislation I sponsored last year that would remedy this situation, this year the state assembly needs to act as well.”

Education Aid

Existing school funding formulas fail to adequately account for the true financial condition of our low-wealth, rural districts. Changes are needed to drive more of the available state aid to lower wealth schools.

“Schools across the state are being asked to do more with less, which is a reality that education administrators are dealing with as best they can. Wealthy districts are sometimes forced to drop one extracurricular activity or cut a fifth language. Many schools within my district are at the point where basic educational needs are suffering.

“The current education aid formula used in New York is outdated and shortchanges low-wealth, rural districts. We need a level playing field so each and every New York student receives the tools

he needs to compete and succeed at the next educational level or in the job market.”

Flood Recovery

Many communities are continuing to rebuild following Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. State government has already offered grant assistance for businesses, local governments and families that were devastated. Additional steps are needed.

“Ever since Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee devastated our state, lives have been altered. We’ve worked with local officials on solutions to rebuild our communities, helped businesses reopen their doors, and comforted those who have lost everything. The state has exhibited a tremendous commitment to help those in need and I will make sure that commitment continues.”

Senator Seward is sponsoring legislation (S.6060) that would offer flood victims an income tax credit against the property taxes they paid on property that suffered substantial storm damage and is no longer valued at its pre-flood level.

“Imagine you have lost your home and everything you own and to compound matters, you receive a property tax bill for that destroyed property. Families don’t know where to turn next, and steps need to be taken immediately to assist them.”

Senator Seward is also sponsoring legislation (S.5886) that would create a comprehensive state-wide flood mitigation program run by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The program would provide funding to municipalities for stream work and other flood mitigation projects.

“Local elected officials want to shore up streambeds and prepare for future natural disasters but the price tag associated with major infrastructure repairs and mitigation projects is simply too high in many cases. State assistance is needed to protect life and property and the taxpayer’s bottom line.”

Summary

Along with his four primary keys for success, Senator Seward is also concentrating on

additional steps to right size state government, halt insurance fraud, and improve upstate roads and bridges.

“In 2011, we produced a number of positive accomplishments. The legislature and the governor worked together to cut state spending, hold the line on taxes and enact aggressive job-creation initiatives. We cannot lose the momentum. In order to produce another victorious legislative session we must continue to focus on initiatives that will generate private sector job growth, hold the line on state spending, and help hard-working residents keep more of their own money.”