



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Support our Community. Shop Local this Holiday Season.

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ISSUE:

- [Families](#)
- [Small Business](#)



By SENATOR TIM KENNEDY

Like so many other families across our state and nation, my family gathered together this Thanksgiving to celebrate and give thanks for all the blessings and gifts we have enjoyed over the past year.

I feel so very fortunate to have three beautiful children, a loving wife, a tight-knit family and parents who taught me the value of hard work and community service. I am also grateful for all of the support I've received throughout Western New York over the course of my first term in the State Senate. Thank you.

As the Holiday season continues, I look forward to more time spent with my family, and I wish you and your family many more happy, fulfilling and relaxing days together.

But before the time comes to kick back and relax, many of us will have to endure some stressful moments brought upon us by the holiday shopping season.

When you're looking for gifts for your family and friends this year, I hope you'll consider shopping local. Western New York is blessed with a wide variety of small businesses that offer an array of potential gifts for loved ones.

However, it's more than a question of vast selections and diverse offerings. Small businesses are the engines for economic growth. Shopping local supports our community.

Between 1993 and 2009, small businesses were responsible for [the creation of about 65 percent of all net new jobs](#). It's true that some folks employed at small businesses lost jobs during the Great Recession, but since the recovery began, [small employers have added almost 3 million new jobs](#).

Purchasing goods locally – and especially buying locally-made goods – will help this trend persist into the future. Studies show that if \$100 is spent at a national chain or “big-box store”, only \$43 is recirculated into our local economy. However, [for every \\$100 spent at an independently-owned small business, approximately \\$68 is reinvested into our community's economy](#).

When you shop local, you support your neighbors who own the business and your neighbors who are employed there. You'll leave the shop with high-quality, unique

products and with the knowledge that you're backing continued growth of our local economy.

It's also important to look for American-made goods – and even better yet, products made right here in New York State or Western New York.

When you purchase American-made goods, it keeps Americans working. If your gifts are inscribed with the words “Made in USA”, you can take extra pride in knowing that you've helped do your part to keep our nation's economy growing.

It has been a priority of mine to urge our state government to pursue that same sense of pride by awarding contracts and purchasing goods from companies located within New York State – and if no N.Y. companies produce needed goods, to put U.S. companies first.

Our nation's and our region's manufacturing sectors are still strong, despite the rough road they have endured over the last several years. In fact, in Western New York alone, there are over 1,000 manufacturing jobs available every month. Across the country, 3 million jobs are left open each month.

Our “Made in the USA” pride may be one factor behind the continued strength of our nation's manufacturing sector, but there are obviously many other forces at play, too. It's our ingenuity, our productivity, our high-quality goods, our relentless pursuit of perfection, our work ethic and more that have kept manufacturing a viable industry in the United States and in Western New York.

With all that said, I come back to the point of the 1,000 local jobs and 3 million American jobs left unfilled every month. The problem is a “skills gap” – workers don't necessarily have the skills employers need. This is the key reason I'm pushing for the establishment of Centers of Workforce Achievement, which would partner community colleges, local employers and regional economic experts to develop a 21st century workforce with the skills needed for the growth sectors within our economy. This proposal will help connect unemployed workers to new jobs.

Our economy grows at its greatest potential when positive forces are working in unison. You can do your part this holiday season by shopping local and purchasing locally-made products.

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