



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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Our Year in Review

We just ended this year's legislative session in Albany, and to be sure it produced real results for every New Yorker concerned about the economy. We passed our third, on-time, responsible state budget which closed multi-billion dollar gaps and we adhered to our self-imposed two-percent cap for a third consecutive year. This prevented \$18.3 billion in new spending or to make it more tangible we avoided \$3,268 in higher taxes on New Yorkers like you. No new state taxes, no new state fees – none.

This approach is crucial because state finances are like personal finances. If one's budget is a mess then progress on other fronts is difficult. So with this sound budget we:

- Reduced middle-class taxes to their lowest level in 60 years;
- Provided new tax incentives to help small businesses create new jobs;
- Increased job opportunities for our returning veterans;
- Delivered a \$350 tax credit to families raising kids;

- Fully funded the STAR property tax relief program, helping seniors and other homeowners across the state;
- Secured \$1 billion in increased education aid – helping our schools, local property taxpayers and most important – our children.
- Accelerated \$86 million in Medicaid payments to struggling counties
- Dedicated \$438 million to local governments to pay for road projects

Working with the Governor we accomplished much, but we did have our share of disagreement too. Most recent among these was the “Women’s Equality Agenda” that you’ve read so much about in the papers so I want to clarify my position here.

I have four daughters so this legislation was as important for me as anyone else. I cosponsored and voted for nine of the original ten points because women should not be paid less than men, should never be sexually harassed, nor should any woman ever be subjected to domestic violence, sexual violence or human trafficking.

But I did not support the abortion expansion measure that was included in the agenda. Now I always promise to shoot straight and it won’t be any different here. The reality is special-interest groups hijacked this legislation and embedded the larger, much more controversial expansion of late-term abortions into the bill’s language in an effort to force lawmakers into an all-or-nothing decision. Yet, no matter how you feel about abortion, most people agree that it should be free from political shell games that “sneak” legislation in via other bills like we saw happening here. It’s just too important.

As for the expansion itself, proponents spin it various ways for newspapers, saying it simply codifies existing law and that not doing so will eventually threaten a woman’s right to

choose. But this is altogether untrue. An honest assessment is that abortion laws are unlikely to be overturned anywhere, especially not in New York and that there is no legitimate threat whatsoever to a woman's right to choose. In fact, the New York Times bestowed New York City the dubious title of "abortion capital of America."

Instead, this legislation included provisions that circumvented long-held standards of viability by allowing abortion-on-demand even into the last 12 weeks of a pregnancy. Poll after poll indicates that most Americans, including a great majority of women, disagree with these late-term abortion efforts. While I respect differences of opinion, I will not support an expansion of late term abortions however it is packaged.

I ask that you join Governor Cuomo and I as we demand that the Assembly take up and pass the balance of the Women's' Agenda so important to our women of today and tomorrow – pay equity, anti harassment, anti discrimination, and laws to combat human trafficking must not be hijacked for a nonexistent threat. These are fundamental issues for all New Yorkers and New York women deserve nothing less.

That being said, there is still much to be done in New York State. I'm confident that if we continue setting petty, partisan politics aside that there are many prosperous tomorrows for our great State. I remain firmly committed to this journey. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.