



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Sen. Joseph A. Griffo response to Governor Cuomo's State of the State Address

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO January 8, 2014

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Gov. Cuomo's themes of taxes, technology and tourism in today's State of the State Address are key facets of growing our economy in Central and Northern New York.

The governor's proposal to reduce the corporate income tax rate for upstate manufacturers to zero is perhaps the most welcomed news of his address. This, combined with the elimination of a utility surcharge, should make our region a more attractive place to start or grow a business. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make both a reality.

Property taxes have eclipsed income taxes as our state's greatest disincentive to living here. The governor recognizes this, and I was pleased that he has proposed steps to credit property owners in fiscally responsible towns as well as improve a patently unfair estate tax system.

I believe the Legislature should go farther than the governor proposed to provide meaningful tax relief, such as completely eliminating the "move to die tax" and creating a permanent state spending cap.

I look forward to seeing the details of the governor's plan when his budget is released Jan. 21. We cannot rely on one-shot revenues and accounting gimmicks to make this tax cut a reality,

or we'll simply return to the fiscal challenge we faced just a few years ago. That type of "roller-coaster" budgeting is bad for the state, bad for business and bad for the people who live here.

I also want to ensure that the governor's plan isn't to "pay" for tax relief by shortchanging our school systems – or rob from vital programs, such as funding for disabled care.

I'm pleased that Gov. Cuomo remains focused on preparing New Yorkers – particularly upstate – to work in the 21st century economy. Nano and cybersecurity in the Mohawk Valley and biotech and telecommunications in the north country are helping to diversify our economy. We need to cultivate a skilled labor force to provide to these industries as they grow, which is why I'm going to be advocating for job training for the unemployed and underemployed and continuing education programs during budget negotiations. I'm also pleased by his call for more technology in the classroom.

While the technology sector represents the promise of the future, the tourism industry is the reality of the present. Gov. Cuomo understands that the Tug Hill and Thousand Islands regions are some of New York's most alluring destinations – and I'm pleased that he's committed scarce advertising dollars for promotion of our winter activities. His new proposal to combine sportsmen's licenses with driver licenses is also welcomed, as long as it isn't an attempt to collect more fees from outdoor enthusiasts.

I'm also encouraged to hear the governor wants to invest in upstate roads and bridges and study the feasibility of Interstate 98.

Finally, I appreciate the governor's call to clean up Albany, especially in light of two recent, disappointing revelations about Assembly members. However, I believe focusing on public campaign financing is not the solution. We need dramatic reform in how Albany runs, and that includes stronger ethics laws and term limits for members and leadership positions, just

to name two. I've relentlessly fought for a government that works more for the people than the special interests, and I'd welcome the governor into my corner on this issue.