



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph E. Robach

## Upstate Now - Senate Majority Plan For Job Growth & Economic Development

JOSEPH E. ROBACH

Dear Friend:

Gift cards are an extremely popular holiday present for loved ones, friends, and coworkers. However, before you buy a gift card this holiday season, you need to be aware of your rights under New York State gift card laws.

New York State's gift card laws protect the value of gift cards from being diminished by hidden fees. The laws also require companies to inform consumers if any terms and conditions apply to the gift card, including expiration dates, fees, and whether a replacement card will be issued if the card is lost, stolen, or destroyed.

The Attorney General may impose a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per offense for companies that break the law, and may order restitution to the consumer. If you believe that a company is violating these laws, you can contact the Attorney General's Regional Offices at 1-800 771-7755.

Sincerely,

Senator Joe Robach

I am pleased to inform you that Governor Spitzer has abandoned his plan to give licenses to illegal aliens because the people of this state abandoned him and overwhelmingly said he was wrong.

His plan was developed in secret, behind closed doors, and without any input from the Legislature, the experts or the people. When he sprung his plan on a surprised public, it triggered an uprising among average citizens and elected officials at the local, state and federal levels.

The Governor's plan would have jeopardized public safety and security. Even the federal Department of Homeland Security opposed the idea of giving drivers licenses to illegal aliens. It would have also created a bureaucratic mess for county clerks who refused to endorse or implement his drivers license plan and would have created an expensive licensing program that would have been a new burden on taxpayers who didn't want it in the first place.

However, despite overwhelming opposition from the people, the Governor ignored them and arrogantly moved ahead with his plan until he caused an uprising among his own party. Only when national politics interceded, only then did he choose to back down.

My colleagues and I in the Senate listened to the people of New York State and we were prepared to stop any effort to allow such an ill-conceived and wrong-headed plan to go forward. We made it clear, during two public hearings and our passage of legislation last month, that we will do all we can to stop his plan and prevent any funding for it.

Still persisting in his arrogance, this morning the Governor chose to blame federal immigration policy rather than admit that he was trying to force a bad idea on people who clearly did not want it. He still supports the idea of giving drivers licenses to illegal aliens and he cannot be trusted to fully abandon a plan that he pushed with such passion and arrogance.

I want to let you know that I will continue to act to ensure that he does not resurrect a plan that so many people recognized was bad for New York State.

Sincerely,

Joe Robach

### **SENATE PASSES BILL TO PROHIBIT DRIVERS LICENSES FOR ILLEGAL ALIENS**

The New York State Senate today passed legislation that would stop Governor Spitzer's plan to issue drivers licenses to illegal aliens by requiring a social security number or proof of authorized presence in the United States to obtain a New York State drivers license or non-driver identification card.

The legislation (S.6484) the Senate passed today is sponsored by Senator Frank Padavan (Queens). It would require applicants for a drivers license or non-driver identification card to submit a social security number. When a social security number cannot be provided, the applicant must demonstrate they are ineligible to get a number and provide satisfactory proof that the applicant's presence in the United States is authorized under federal law.

### **SENATE PASSES BRIDGE REFORM LEGISLATION**

Measure Ensures Dedicated Funds for Highway and Bridge Construction and Repair

The New York State Senate today passed legislation (S.6516), sponsored by Senator Thomas Libous (R-C-I, Binghamton), Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, to fix the State's Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund (DHBTF) by directing more funding to bridge and road construction and repair.

The Bridge and Road Investment and Dedicated Fund Guaranteed Enforcement (BRIDGE) Reform Act will amend the State Finance Law to create a five-year phase-out (approximately 20% per year) of non-bridge and road expenses and prohibit these uses thereafter. The BRIDGE Reform Act aims to clean up the Dedicated Fund by removing DOT Snow and Ice Removal expenses totaling \$563 million and DMV Operational expenses totaling \$199 million so that this money can be used to fix roads and bridges.

“Maintaining the safety and viability of New York’s infrastructure is a critically important investment that needs our attention,” said State Senator Joe Robach. “This legislation will ensure that money dedicated to be used for highway and bridge construction and repairs will not be diverted for other uses -- this will be a true “dedicated” funding source for bridges and highways.”

## **SENATE PASSES LEGISLATION TO PROTECT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS**

### **Bill Would Allow Victims to Testify Via Closed-Circuit Television**

The New York State Senate today passed legislation (S.4875), sponsored by Senator Cathy Young (R-C-I, Olean) that would provide victims of domestic violence greater protection by allowing them to testify in court via closed-circuit television.

Senator Young’s legislation was introduced this April at a Capitol news conference, in observance of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, where members of the Senate Majority were joined by Mrs. New York State 2007 Lori Donaudy of Smithtown, Long Island. A former victim of domestic abuse, Lori’s platform as Mrs. New York includes raising awareness of domestic violence, supporting victims, and raising funds for Joe Torre’s Safe at Home Foundation.

Over two-thirds of domestic violence crimes against women are committed by someone known to them. Very often, vulnerable witnesses are reluctant to testify about crimes that have been committed against them out of fear. Allowing these witnesses to testify via closed-circuit television may help their willingness to come forward and testify.

## **LINKS: USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES**

### **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LINKS:**

[The White House Homepage](#)

[The United States Senate Homepage](#)

[The United States House of Representatives Homepage](#)

[Department of Homeland Security](#)

[THOMAS: US Congress on the Internet](#)

[FirstGov: The US Government's Official Web Portal to Citizen Resources](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

STATE GOVERNMENT LINKS:

[NYS Government Information Locator Service](#)

[NYS Senate Homepage](#)

[Senate Districts By Zip Code](#)

[NYS Legislative Bill Drafting](#) (look up bills and laws)

[Demographic Research & Reapportionment](#)

[New York State Homepage](#)

#### STATE DEPARTMENTS AND SERVICES:

[New York State Department of Motor Vehicles](#)

[New York State Department of Health](#)

[New York State Department of Education](#)

[New York State Banking Department](#)

[Adelphi Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Center](#)

[NYS Thruway Authority's EZ-Pass](#)

[New York Council on Problem Gambling](#)

[New York State Canal System](#)

#### LOCAL (MONROE COUNTY & THE GREATER ROCHESTER REGION) LINKS:

[Monroe County's Official Homepage](#)

[City of Rochester Homepage](#)

[Monroe County Library System](#)

[Rochester International Jazz Festival](#)

[Rochester Area Entertainment and Events Guide](#)

[Genesee Country Museum & Village](#)

[Rochester Museum and Science Center](#)

[Memorial Art Gallery](#)

[George Eastman House](#)

[Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra \(RPO\)](#)

## TOWNS AND VILLAGES:

[Chili \(Town\)](#)

Churchville (Village)

East Rochester (Village)

Fairport (Village)

Henrietta (Town)

Honeoye Falls (Village)

Irondequoit (Town)

Mendon (Town)

Penfield (Town)

Perinton (Town)

Pittsford (Town)

Pittsford (Village)

Riga (Town)

Rush (Town)



[Scottsville \(Village\)](#)

[Wheatland \(Town\)](#)

#### MISCELLANEOUS LINKS:

[Albany Web Cam](#)

[FindLaw Legal Research](#)

[NY State Senate's Women of Distinction Online Exhibit](#)

[State and Federal Aid for Local Governments](#)

Eliminating Business Taxes on Manufacturing in New York State (This would provide \$60 million in tax relief, growing to nearly \$500 million in relief when fully implemented).

Providing property tax rebates for small businesses that employ fewer than 20 employees. (Under the Senate's plan, a new Small Business STAR program would be established. It would deliver direct rebate checks, averaging \$700, to small businesses that pay school taxes and employ less than 20 people. This measure would provide \$150 million in property tax relief).

Reducing the Corporate Franchise Tax Rate from 7.1 percent to 6.85 percent (This would provide \$35 million in tax relief, growing to \$94 million when fully implemented).

Reduce other taxes on small businesses, aviation and marine fuel.

Encouraging the Federal Government to stop taxing New York's economic development incentives (Currently, federal law requires New York employers to pay federal taxes on the capital and equipment investments that the State makes to lure major employers like Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) and IBM. This places New York at a tremendous disadvantage with foreign competitors when it comes to attracting major new investments in manufacturing and/or technology facilities).

Capitalize on unused investment tax credits to provide investment in upstate.

**2. Building and Investing in a 21st Century Infrastructure for the Upstate Economy:** Upstate Now calls for hundreds of millions of dollars in targeted investments in upstate's infrastructure. Projects include establishing high-speed trains in key upstate corridors, expanding our roads, water lines and technology infrastructure to support job growth. The plan will also create commerce and economic growth zones around regional airports to promote location of new businesses.

Specific elements of the plan's second component include:

\$300 million in capital to support key economic development and emerging technology projects.

Building high-speed passenger trains to interconnect New York's cities.

Rebuilding roads and bridges with a Highway and Bridge Capital Plan.

Supporting the infrastructure to provide broadband access across the State.

Reviving our water and sewer line infrastructure to support growth.

Investing in the 21st Century Food Laboratory in Geneva and the State Data Center in Utica

Creating new commerce and economic growth zones around regional airports.

**3. Making Upstate an International Powerhouse in New and Emerging Technologies:** The Senate is advancing new incentives to encourage emerging technology companies that already do research and development in New York, to take that next step and actually manufacture their products in the Empire State. The plan will also seek to more fully integrate the groundbreaking research taking place at New York's outstanding colleges and universities, with the local and regional private-sector economies across upstate. The plan makes extensive investments to support expansion and assist in the retention of agribusiness and agriculturally related jobs in the State. Building upon the success of the J2K Program, \$100 million in critical capital funding will be distributed through regional partnerships enacted in 2006.

Specific elements of the plan's third component include:

Attracting major manufacturers with refundable tax credits, such as those that were successfully utilized to secure the AMD investment in the Capital Region.

\$100 million for regional partnerships for strategic investments.

Taking advantage of the existing \$300 million for regional venture funds to spur new investment and job creation.

Investing in Agribusiness and Agricultural Enterprise Applied Research and Technology.

Promoting and encouraging research produced in New York.

Authorizing a sales tax exemption for businesses in academic incubators.

Providing commercialization assistance grants.

Increasing the Qualified Emerging Technology Company Credit.

Creating Incentives for Bioscience and Nanoscience commercialization.

Supporting new capital investments in Upstate's Outstanding Emerging Technology Centers.

Reconfigure Economic Development zones to address rural needs.

**4. Reducing Energy Costs for Employers and Promote Energy Independence:** New York's small business leaders have consistently cited high energy costs as a major obstacle to future growth, profitability and new job creation. To address this problem, Upstate Now advances a tax credit program that would help eligible small businesses afford the rising cost of energy. In addition the upstate plan will ensure that New York will have renewable energy for the future. Encouraging renewable energy products to sustain future economic growth without being held hostage to a petroleum based economy.

Specific components of the energy package include the following:

Promoting energy independence and clean alternative energy.

Providing Energy Cost Assistance to Small Businesses (This initiative will provide a \$350 million refundable energy tax credit to help 386,000 small businesses).

Providing Solar and Fuel Cell Manufacturer Tax Credits.

Offering Cellulosic Ethanol Production Tax Credit.

Offering Alternative Energy Use Tax Credit.

Eliminating the Petroleum Business Tax on Nonresidential Heating Fuel.

Providing \$300 million for investments in clean, renewable energy research and commercialization, including clean coal and bio-fuels.

Extend low-cost power programs, including Power for Jobs.

Reduce property taxes for land used for Biofeedstock Production.

**5 . Reducing Health Care Costs for Small Businesses to Insure More Families:** The skyrocketing cost of health insurance forces many businesses to face the difficult decision of shifting more of the cost of coverage to employees or dropping coverage entirely. The Senate's plan would significantly reduce the number of uninsured New Yorkers through a combination of tax advantages, government initiatives and commercial insurance market reforms that would bring health insurance within the means of all small businesses and every New Yorker.

This component of the Upstate Now plan includes the following measures:

Enabling businesses to Purchase Healthy-NY at the unsubsidized cost.

Expanding Healthy-NY for Individuals, from 208 percent to 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

Providing a Tax Credit for Small Business Health Insurance Costs.

Exemp