



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Return To Greatness

JAMES L. SEWARD January 8, 2009

Much like a sports franchise after a down year, the state needs to rebuild. While there is some heavy lifting ahead, job creation and tax relief, combined with commonsense cuts can help spur our economy.

The governor has presented his budget, and his state of the state address, now it is time to take those unfinished pieces of the puzzle and create a completed solution that will return New York to greatness.

The first step back to prosperity needs to come on the job front. We must focus on the small businesses and manufacturers dotting our upstate landscape, finding ways to make them more competitive. I want to make sure those companies that have been loyal to New York are rewarded. I also want to improve the overall business climate so new companies will move into our region.

My plan includes new job creating tax cuts, a reduction of burdensome government red tape, and an increased investment in community revitalization. The proposal would also provide interest free loans to college students, and if they stay and work here after graduation, those loans could be paid down in full. We often hear of "brain drain" as our young people go off to other state in search of work. We need to give them added incentives to stay here, and make

sure they have quality employment opportunities.

We also need to do some belt tightening in Albany, just like every family and business across the state. The first step is the formation of a special bipartisan task force that will review existing state agencies and authorities. Many of these have served their purpose and can be consolidated. Others have similar functions and can be consolidated with those with like objectives. I want this special task force to return a plan to the state legislature by April 1st, identifying \$1 billion to \$2 billion in savings.

There are other areas where the state can save as well. Enhanced Medicaid fraud detection is one area where some savings have already been realized, but I believe there is more. We need to root out fraudulent claims, and make sure we are delivering services in an efficient manner.

Property tax relief is another key ingredient. Transferring the state's deficit to towns, counties and cities already struggling to keep taxes down doesn't do anything except shift the burden from one tax bill to another. I am calling for a property tax cap on property taxes as they currently exist. I also want to forbid any state budget actions from pressuring property taxes. The governor's budget proposal is loaded with over \$6 billion in new taxes and fees. If it's not taxed, he wants to tax it, and if you already pay a tax, he wants to raise it. Adding to the tax burden will only alienate people, driving small businesses, middle class families, and senior citizens out of the state.

Obviously, we have a great deal of work ahead. The state's budget situation overshadows everything else we will do in Albany in the foreseeable future. I do agree we must move ahead swiftly to ensure a timely review of the budget and early passage to maximize savings. I will be working cooperatively with the governor and my partners in the legislature on a bipartisan basis to overcome our fiscal challenges. However, we have a responsibility to

ensure that any cuts are applied fairly, and that they don't create an undue burden on any one segment of the public, or any one area of the state.

These are challenging times and difficult decisions must be made. Tricks and gimmicks won't be able to bail us out this time. But I am confident that with the right combination of common sense cuts and economic development we can move the state forward in a positive direction and return to greatness.

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