



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

PROMISES MADE, PROMISES KEPT

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Just over six months ago, I arrived in Albany as New York State faced an historic crisis. The tax and spend mentality that dominated thinking in the legislature for too many years had led to a \$10 billion deficit and projections of a \$15 billion budget gap next year, record unemployment levels, record job losses, record business closings, and economic stagnation.

Public confidence and trust in our scandal plagued state government was at an all time low. Some were suggesting that the solution was to raise taxes and increase spending. They didn't recognize that raising taxes and spending had led our once great state to this historic crisis. They didn't seem to understand that the old way of thinking had cost our state jobs, businesses, population and too many of our young people and families.

I could see I had my work cut out for me.

I knew I couldn't change New York's problems by myself. That's why I asked you and the rest of the residents of Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties for your thoughts and suggestions on how we could get New York moving again and reverse the decline that had cost our state its reputation as an economic leader.

Thanks to your help and advice through letters, e-mails, on-line messages and phone calls, we have begun to achieve the historic changes to transform New York and return it to its former greatness.

Over the past six months, New York has begun to emerge from the crisis. I can now report to you that the promises I made to you are promises I have kept.

By working on a bipartisan basis with Governor Andrew Cuomo, I helped to adopt an historic on-time budget that erased the deficit our state was facing. I rejected the calls for new taxes and new spending. I insisted the legislature do what you and your family does every week across the kitchen table. The budget we adopted actually restored the state to fiscal sanity by rejecting gimmicks, rejecting borrowing and holding the line on spending. For the first time in a long time, it balances revenues and expenses, the same way millions of New York families make ends meet.

The other day, I had the opportunity to stand next to Governor Andrew Cuomo as he signed the historic legislation I cosponsored in the Senate to cap property taxes. Together, we passed a mandate relief bill that will serve as a necessary first step to helping local governments and school districts return to fiscal sanity.

I recognize a lot more still needs to be done. I also understand that government at all levels faces more hard choices and tough decisions. But by insisting on fiscal discipline to restore our financial health and ethical reforms to restore the public's faith in our government and its leaders, I believe we have put New York back on the path to prosperity.

By making the hard choices to fundamentally change the way our state does business, we have begun to reform Medicaid, consolidated government programs and reduced unnecessary agencies and government bureaucracies.

Yes, more work needs to be done. But by enacting a historic property tax cap, we have sent a message to government at all levels that we can no longer treat homes and businesses as some kind of ATM machine every time politicians want to spend someone else's money.

Six months ago, few people believed we could enact a cap on property taxes. Six months ago, few people believed we could hold the line on spending and taxes. But today, New York is beginning to see signs that it is emerging from the economic stagnation that left its economy reeling.

Together, we have shown we can restore New York as a place where families will want to live and businesses will want to grow.