



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Legislative Successes in 2015, Challenges Ahead for Next Year

MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER December 16, 2015

| ISSUE: **COMMON CORE, PROPERTY TAX, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION**

Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on December 16th. The holiday season is in full swing already, and it's hard to believe that the end of one year and the beginning of another is only weeks away. At this time of year, it's important to reflect on some of the past year's achievements, while looking ahead to legislative priorities for next year.

This year's state budget restrained spending for a fifth year in a row and rejected tax increases. In fact, over the past five years, a \$10 billion deficit has been turned into a surplus,

creating an opportunity to return more money to taxpayers.

This year's budget committed a record amount of funding to fully fund STAR and Enhanced STAR. Additionally, the budget delivered bigger rebate checks for a second consecutive year. Most importantly, the property tax cap was renewed.

While the cap hasn't solved all of our problems, it has helped to encourage fiscal discipline and keeping a lid on tax increases. According to one study, taxpayers have saved more than \$7.6 billion since it was enacted four years ago. In 2015-16 alone, homeowners are expected to save a total of \$3.3 billion in school taxes.

Overall, New York's fiscal house is in order. Now, our community is finally experiencing an economic resurgence all across Western New York, from Buffalo to Batavia to Rochester. In the last five years, 673,500 jobs have been created. Today, hundreds of economic development projects are investing hundreds of millions of dollars across the Western New York region.

From an on-time state budget to a renewed property tax cap, there have been many accomplishments. However, challenges still remain ahead.

The State Legislature will reconvene on January 5th for session. My major priorities are fixing the Common Core learning standards, securing Upstate New York's fair share for our infrastructure, and crafting a state budget that is fiscally responsible.

First, it's time to correct the Common Core by passing common-sense reforms to empower parents and teachers, restore local control and address problems caused by an overemphasis on standardized testing.

Second, it's time for Upstate to get its fair share of transportation funding after Governor Cuomo and the New York City Mayor agreed to send billions of state tax dollars to downstate's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Our crumbling roads and bridges have been put on the back burner for too long.

Lastly, the budget must continue to keep spending under control, reject new taxes and include initiatives to help our local economy grow and thrive.

I look forward to addressing these challenges in an effort to serve you, your family and our community. From my family to yours, I wish you a Happy Holiday season and a healthy, prosperous New Year!