



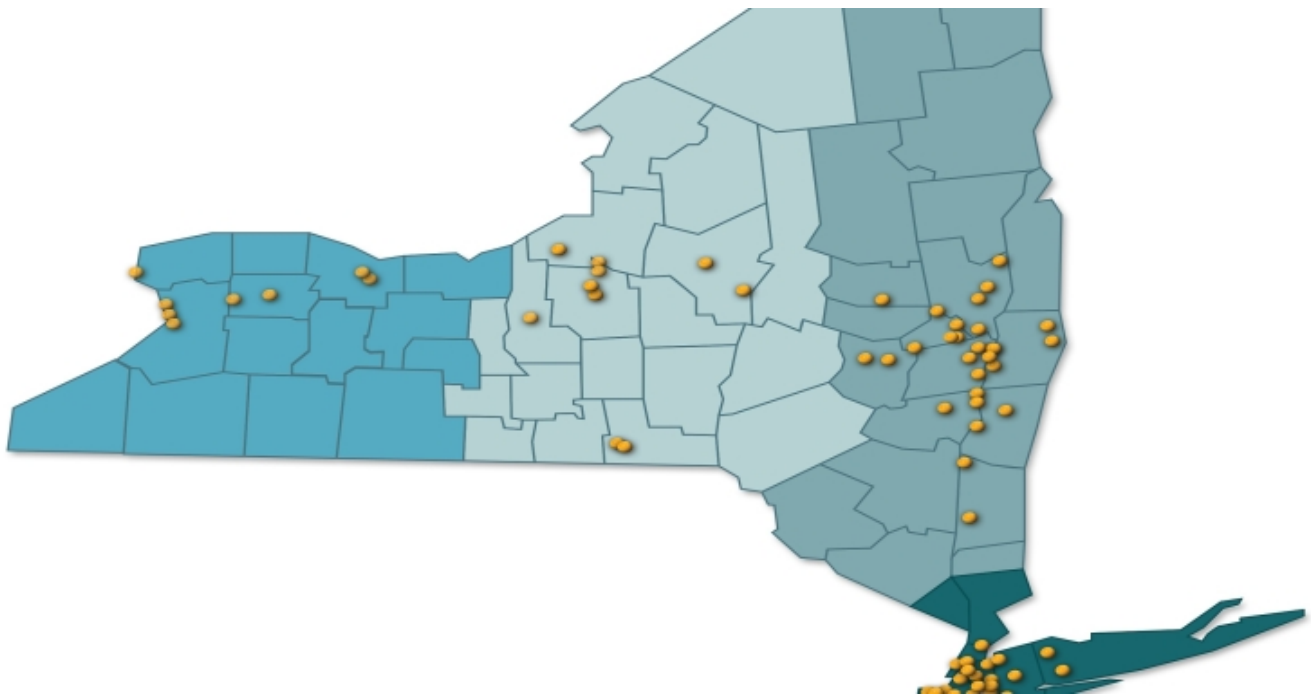
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

State Tax Filing Assistance Program Lacks Geographic Diversity

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR January 28, 2016

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ONEONTA, 01/28/16 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today called on the State Department of Taxation and Finance to review plans for free tax filing assistance and add locations in rural portions of the state.

“Assisting low-income individuals file their income taxes is a laudable initiative,” said Senator Seward. **“Unfortunately, the free assistance sessions being offered by the State Department of Taxation and Finance are concentrated mainly in urban locations, neglecting wide swaths of the state.”**

A recent announcement from the governor and the tax department hailed the opening of 85 free Facilitated Self Assistance (FSA) sites staffed by department experts who are available to assist eligible New Yorkers electronically file their 2015 taxes. Upon reviewing the list of sites, Senator Seward observed that only two are located within his nine-county senate district.

“Rural areas of the state are quite often neglected when it comes to programs of this nature. Moving forward, it is my hope that additional FSA sites can be added to spread this valuable resource to all corners of New York,” Seward added.

In a letter to State Department of Taxation and Finance Commissioner Jerry Boone, Senator Seward writes:

“While I understand it would be difficult to staff free assistance sites in every municipality, it seems to me that there are vast portions of the state that are completely unserved. Many of the regions left without any free tax filing sites are rural, low-income areas exceedingly populated by people who are eligible for your help.”

Senator Seward also points out that many of the areas not included in the free program are rural locations where taxpayers have limited broadband access.

“Further, as New York works to encourage more individuals to file their tax returns electronically it is these rural areas, where broadband internet service is sparse, that are in true need of assistance.”