



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Focus on the Fundamentals - 2018 Priorities

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| ISSUE: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SPENDING CAP, PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, HEROIN & OPIOID TASK FORCE, LYME DISEASE TASK FORCE**



ONEONTA, 01/12/18 – In media conferences across his district kicking off the 2018 session of the New York State Senate, State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref-Oneonta) today detailed his legislative priorities. Senator Seward says creating opportunities for economic growth while improving the state's affordability are the fundamental priorities he will focus on.

“As we start 2018, there are a number of challenges ahead. However, I know that we have great potential here in the 51st senate district and across New York State,” said Senator Seward. “Our state lost population in 2016 and experienced only minor gains last year. The best way to grow here in the Empire State is through policies focusing on two key fundamentals - creating new job opportunities and emphasizing affordability for families and businesses.”

Increasing Economic Opportunities

Recent initiatives to reduce energy taxes, invest in major economic development and transportation projects, and expand job-training programs are all having a positive effect on New York State’s economy. Last year the senate successfully led the fight for the most significant workers’ compensation reform in a decade and expanded ride-sharing throughout the state. Moving forward, additional broad-based tax relief programs and regulatory reforms are needed to ensure job growth.

“The best way to attack the financial challenges we face in New York State is through economic growth. Lowering taxes that stifle business growth is among the first steps we should take to help create jobs. It is also vital that we finally move ahead with comprehensive mandate relief. Burdensome regulations that do nothing but waste an employer’s time and drive up the cost of doing business in New York need to be eliminated. The time is also right to review taxpayer financed state programs intended to create jobs – if they aren’t bearing fruit then terminate them.”

Senator Seward’s economic development priorities include:

- Broad-based tax relief programs to lower the cost of doing business;
- Elimination of outdated and unnecessary state regulations;
- Extension of the STAR property tax relief program to small business owners;
- Greater workforce training – connecting educators with employers;
- Broadband expansion to rural areas.

A More Affordable New York

A record middle class income tax cut took effect on January 1, 2018. The measure, authored by the state senate, reduces personal income tax rates for more than 4.4 million New Yorkers and tens of thousands of small businesses. For middle class taxpayers, savings will average approximately \$250 in 2018 and grow to \$700 annually. State government has also employed fiscally conservative principles to keep spending in check. Additional measures, and an end to unfunded state mandates, will also help stop the exodus from New York.

“Along with creating opportunities, we need a more affordable New York. I have worked to keep property taxes in check and will continue to support measures that will allow hardworking New Yorkers to keep more of their money. The Middle Class Income Tax Cut is a strong start, and I will pushing to accelerate the phase in so people will be able to keep more of their hard-earned money sooner. Several tax cuts aimed at helping senior citizens stay in their homes are also priorities.

“We also need to focus on the spending side of the ledger. I will continue to support a two-percent state spending cap to make sure Albany doesn’t go on a spending spree. We have been following this guideline on a voluntary basis and making it law will ensure state spending will remain in check in the future. We also need to make the property tax levy cap permanent. The senate has already approved these measures and it is time the assembly and governor join us.”

Senator Seward’s affordability priorities include:

- A two percent state spending cap;
- Permanent property tax levy cap;
- Twenty-five percent increase in property tax rebate checks;
- Eliminate the two percent gross receipts tax on energy;
- Freeze and eliminate school taxes for senior citizens;
- Double the exemption on retirement income.

Education - Supporting our Future

Education aid is consistently one of the largest portions of the state budget. The 2017-18 state budget included a record level of school aid funding of approximately \$26 billion – a 4.4 percent increase from the previous year. Additional steps are needed to further help schools in low wealth areas of the state. Programs to ensure students are properly trained for tech jobs and assistance to help families and students afford a college education will also be a leading priority.

“Ensuring our schools have the resources they need to help students succeed and meet new challenges has always been one of my leading priorities. Not only does the funding help with classroom needs, it is also imperative to keeping local property taxes in check.

“We also need to prepare students for the real world – and the new jobs that are available. I am a strong proponent of a college education, and am supportive of measures to help more families pay their tuition bill, but we also need to focus more resources on other job-training programs. It is important that we partner with business leaders and employers to make sure students are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow. We can also take steps to re-educate older adults who want to make a career change.”

Lyme Task Force

Senator Seward was recently appointed to the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases (TBDs). The task force is charged with improving prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of these diseases to better protect the health of New Yorkers and their families.

“The Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases has performed groundbreaking work and helped focus the spotlight on tick-borne illnesses. We know more today than ever before about these debilitating ailments and are making strides in prevention and treatment. However, it is clear that Lyme disease and other TBDs are spreading to new areas of the state – I hear from constituents regularly who have been infected – and we need to intensify our efforts.

“In discussing this issue with individuals who have contracted Lyme and doctors alike, it is clear that diagnosis and treatment plans vary greatly. We need to develop a uniform health care strategy that will increase positive outcomes so people aren’t left guessing if they are infected or if they will be left

to struggle with a debilitating disease for the rest of their lives.”

Senator Seward is co-sponsoring newly introduced legislation (S.6926) to create specific protocol to notify individuals of their diagnoses related to Lyme and other TBDs. The senate bill would require the Commissioner of Health to work with health care providers to develop a standard protocol and patient notification for the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme and TBDs.

Heroin Task Force

As a member of the Senate’s Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction since its inception in 2014, Senator Seward has been a leader in enacting new laws focused on addressing the heroin crisis.

“The heroin crisis has reached every segment of our population and is destroying individuals, families, and communities. I have helped enact a number of new laws to increase access to treatment and support those in recovery. I have also worked closely with community groups that are on the front lines of this epidemic to learn what is working and what more can be done to help save lives.

“Going forward, we must take additional steps to target drug kingpins who profit and prey on the addiction of others. One piece of legislation that would help would establish the crime of homicide by sale of an opioid controlled substance. The bill would allow law enforcement officials to charge a dealer with homicide if heroin or an opiate-controlled substance they sell causes an overdose death. The senate has passed the bill in each of the last three years, but the assembly has failed to consider the measure.”

Summary

“These fundamental priorities provide a strong starting point, but there are other high-level concerns that I will take up - help for farmers, improvements to our roads and bridges, protecting our Second Amendment rights, and tougher laws to combat sexual harassment – to name a few. I will also be keeping close watch on Washington D.C. and working to make sure any policies enacted in our nation’s capital won’t have a negative impact on New York.

“Every year begins with new found optimism and 2018 is no different. We will be confronting some challenging issues in Albany, but we have a strong foundation to build on and I look forward to a productive legislative session that will lead to a more vital New York,” Senator Seward concluded.