



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## 2019 Legislative Priorities

ROBERT G. ORTT January 8, 2019

**A column from Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda)**

Last November's elections saw the balance of power in New York State completely vanish – both geographically and politically. No longer is there the safety valve that was the Senate Republican Conference to defend upstate and stop the misguided and fiscally irresponsible policy promulgated from the regressive, New York City-based left. What comes next – gauging history as well as the announced intentions of those in power – will be an agenda that dramatically attempts to make New York the most liberal and “progressive” state in the union. The focus will be on the needs of New York City and supposed bogeyman in Washington, DC as opposed to the real needs of everyday New Yorkers.

The governor and his NYC colleagues in the Legislature seek to disarm legal gun-owners, implement overbearing and burdensome taxes and regulations on our businesses and farms, irresponsibly increase state spending, and dismantle the rule of law (or at least the laws that they disagree with). Ultimately, it is up to the Senate Republican Conference to highlight – and whenever possible – stop these disastrous policies while advocating for the needs of Upstate and Western New York.

Last week, I was named ranker on two new committees: the Senate's committee on Veterans, Homeland Security & Military Affairs and the Agriculture committee. These new committees will allow me to influence policy on areas that are pillars of our state and country. While

serving on the Veterans, Homeland Security & Military Affairs committee, I want to continue my focus on veterans' suicide and mental health. We can do much more to help returning veterans find quality care, education, and employment. In the Senate Committee on Agriculture, we must adopt policies that keep agriculture a viable economic driver in small communities across our state, and I look forward to continuing my work as a voice for all of our state's farmers.

We have already seen the introduction of a bill that would require gun owners to purchase \$1 million in liability insurance coverage and a bill that would force those applying to purchase firearms to hand over their social media passwords. The regressive left will not be happy until the Second Amendment is a relic of the past. They are attempting to dismantle our constitutional right to keep and bear arms until there is nothing left to protect your family and loved ones from those who would wish to do you harm. We must remain steadfast in our protection of the Second Amendment and continue to repel any attempts to disarm legal gun owners under the guise of security. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.

This upcoming session, we must also focus on making Western New York more affordable. In spite of the governor's eight-year upstate jobs plan, which included spending billions of dollars on select private companies and well-connected donors, record numbers of residents continue to leave our state. The governor was right when he blamed the state's exodus on the climate. However, it is the business climate and its overbearing regulations, not the weather that is driving people away. We must create an environment where businesses can flourish, residents can find work and families wish to grow.

Finally, last year, Senate Republicans blocked over \$1 billion in new taxes and regulations proposed by Assembly Democrats. While nothing stands in the way of the Democrat's

crushing new taxes, it is paramount that residents of New York know how their tax dollars are being spent. They deserve to know that their hard-earned tax dollars will be used to provide free college to illegal immigrants and incarcerated individuals, while also being used to file frivolous lawsuits against the President.

The disintegration of law and order will be apparent more now than ever with an all-Democrat Legislature. Law enforcement will be villainized, while cop-killers are re-branded as political prisoners. Sex offenders will continue to receive executive pardons while illegal immigrants will be protected over American citizens.

These next few years will be challenging for law-abiding, middle-class New Yorkers. This time around, the balance of power has been tipped in favor of downstate more than ever and it is important that Senate Republicans remain a voice of reason for those seeking rational-minded leadership.

###