



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rich Funke

The Crisis- an Op-Ed by Senator Funke

SENATOR RICH FUNKE April 2, 2019

| ISSUE: **2019-20 BUDGET, BUDGET, 2019-2020 BUDGET, 2019 BUDGET**

The Crisis

In his famous series of pamphlets during the American Revolution called "The Crisis" Thomas Paine laid out the reasons why colonists should support the patriot cause. The opening sentence still stirs people to action today " These are the times that try men's souls." Upstate New York faces an existential crisis that will take all of us to fix.

New York State has gained 1.1 million private sector jobs since 2010, but 88% of them were created downstate. Upstate New York as a whole created 53,000 fewer jobs than Brooklyn alone during that same period. As the economy worsened, more people left. 42 upstate counties have lost population since 2010 totaling 93,000 people. Why are they leaving? To me, the answer is clear. According to the Tax Foundation, a Washington DC tax policy research organization New Yorkers pay more tax per-capita than any other state. This impact is particularly pernicious upstate where income growth is more stagnant. This crisis of high taxes and population loss is a double whammy.

Enter the New York City Democrats and their agenda in the State Legislature. The recent State Budget proves that sometimes the proposed cure can be worse than the disease. Eager to spend more on progressive programs my colleagues in the Senate Democrat majority

working with Governor Cuomo raised taxes by billions. They hit sick folks with a prescription drug tax, car renters with a 6% fee, those who purchase on the internet with a new tax and they even slapped a fee on your grocery bags. This is the opposite of what we need and ignores the crisis we face.

To make matters worse Governor Cuomo and his allies made bizarre choices in this budget. They spent \$27 million for tuition assistance for illegal immigrants. They lowered jail sentences on these same folks to prevent lawful deportation and they forever changed our criminal justice system to help criminals while putting law abiding citizens at greater risk.

No one is leaving New York because we don't pass enough progressive policies. People are leaving because the state isn't affordable and upstate in particular lacks economic opportunity.

The Democrats who are running our state are absolutely tone deaf to the real challenges and needs of our region. Secure in their colloquial cocoons, they imagine a more utopian world and ignore reality.

If you thought the budget and the first three months of this legislative session were bad- wait till you see what's coming. Legalization of prostitution and marijuana, farm worker legislation that will bankrupt farms, free health care for illegal immigrants and government run healthcare that will bankrupt the entire state.

I urge all people of good will in our region-Democrat or Republican, Liberal or Conservative, to come together to stop what's happening. Engaged citizens holding their elected leaders accountable can still stop this train from running over all of us. This is not a choice between left and right, it's a choice between hope and insanity, growth and stagnation, common sense and doctrinaire ideology. Our time is not finished in upstate New York but the hour is late. These are the times that try men's souls.