



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Republicans Unveil COVID-19 Action Plan

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ISSUE:

- [COVID-19](#)
- [Economic Development](#)
- [Small Business](#)
- [Consumer Protection](#)



ALBANY, 03/20/20 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I - Oneonta) today joined along with members of the Senate Republican Conference sent New York Governor Andrew Cuomo a COVID—19 Action Plan that includes a wide range of immediate bipartisan steps the state can take to protect New Yorkers at a time of crisis.

“As we battle the COVID-19 pandemic it is essential that we enact a comprehensive plan to protect health and well-being and also safeguard our small businesses and employees,” said Senator Seward. **“The governor has taken a number of steps to combat the spread of Coronavirus, but there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding our economy. Small business owners contact me on a daily basis and they are rightfully anxious about their future. Workers are also equally concerned about how they will survive and make ends meet. This action plan addresses a number of the concerns employers and employees have expressed to me and will help us recover from this pandemic.”**

The COVID—19 Action Plan:

Health

Allow physicians who are licensed and in good standing in other states to practice in New York. In the event that there is a shortage (or need), New York should waive

any in-state licensing requirements for these physicians to practice during the crisis;
Allow Nurse Practitioners to practice in an unrestricted fashion;
Establish a direct line for medical professionals to refer questions to the Department of Health;
In the event that there are school districts that are still unable to set up a physical location where students can pick up meals that they traditionally obtain from school, the districts should be allowed/encouraged to have meals delivered; and
Establish a threat level assessment tool to indicate to affected communities the level of threat their community is currently experiencing. This would be akin to the threat level system implemented after the events of 9/11.

Jobs, Taxes, and the Economy

Taxes

Accelerate the Middle Class Tax Cuts to provide relief to individuals and small businesses; and
Provide a tax credit for paying workers who aren't working -- 25% credit for additional sick time or any sick leave, vacation, or furlough that the business was not paying before.

Small Businesses Across the State

Extend by 90 days the payment of monthly sales tax;
Make available no-interest loans immediately to entities that face a dramatic decrease in business;
Eliminate penalties for late payments of business and property taxes;
Extend the cure period for various violations facing businesses during the crisis;
Expand STAR for small businesses and accelerate tax cuts for small businesses;
Have ESD create a hotline to connect businesses to capital and interim assistance;
Issue Economic Injury Disaster Declaration -- allows small businesses access to SBA (small business administration);
Call upon private industry to redirect existing resources to develop necessary products to fight the virus (masks, gloves, gowns, ventilators, etc.); and
Reimburse for additional costs associated with expansion of paid sick/family leave.

Restaurants, Bars and Other Food Establishments

Prevent price gouging by implementing delivery fee caps. While our restaurants and food establishments are still permitted to have food delivered, food delivery apps and others should not take advantage of the unfolding situation; and
Extend the window for restaurants to make payments on COVID-19 related costs they are incurring.

Higher Education

Ensure the SUNY/CUNY reimbursement plan for families is immediate and includes room and board as well any fees the students were charged by the campus.

Medicaid

Work to provide local tax relief with any supplemental Medicaid funds provided by the Federal Government in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Plastic Bags

Temporarily suspend New York's plastic bag ban in grocery stores for the safety of consumers, similar to the actions of Maine in delaying their plastic bag ban.

Consumer Protection

Waive late fees and cancellation fees for consumer goods and services due to the COVID-19 outbreak, including gym memberships, cell phone plans, and any other nonessential quality of life items;

Mandate grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential businesses provide specified hours for vulnerable populations; and

Expand the EDC budget for advertising, to encourage New Yorkers to buy local to support local stores and farmers.

Insurance

For mandated closures the State should provide the cost of additional unemployment insurance rate increases;

Relax, suspend, or repeal DFS regulations to encourage the expansion and affordability of business interruption insurance; and

Relax, suspend, or repeal DFS & DOH regulations to promote the delivery of health care services over virtual platforms, including tele-health.