



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of December 28, 2020 ~ 'Approaching the New Year with hope'

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 28, 2020

| ISSUE: **COMBATING COVID-19 AND PROTECTING NEW YORKERS**



There is enormous work facing us to fix what's broken and keep providing fundamental assistance. On the legislative front, we must continue to hear the voices of small business, farming, tourism, manufacturing and other foundations of local economies.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Approaching the New Year with hope"

Finally.

Heading toward the beginning of a new year, the ongoing distribution of more widespread COVID-19 vaccinations appears to be the long-awaited mile marker on this incredibly long and hard road back to public health and economic renewal.

First and foremost, make no mistake that reaching this point of potential renewal is the product of personal responsibility, and enormous perseverance and sacrifice on the part of so many.

Every single one of you who have heard the public health guidelines, and then honored them, made the difference. This public health emergency has called for all hands on deck and you have responded.

Keep holding the line and listening to our local public health departments.

Public health has been and remains the top priority because it is paramount to being able to fully attack the economic crisis that has and is inflicting enormous pain and upheaval.

A true reopening will be the product of strong regional teamwork on public outreach and care. This teamwork will remain fundamental to our success throughout the weeks and months ahead. The experience gained and the bonds cemented over the past ten months will continue to serve us well.

Now we need to keep pushing forward, reopening more sectors of local economies, and getting more workers back on the job as soon as possible.

On the economic front of this battle to reclaim and regain solid ground in our lives, we will need the Cuomo administration to better recognize that our regional reopening can and must move forward with greater clarity, common sense, and fairness.

Many of us here in the region – government officials, business owners, and workers alike -- believe this reopening process can be accomplished more effectively and rapidly without jeopardizing public health. Guidelines that may be absolutely necessary in downstate regions, for example, shouldn't be unreasonably applied upstate.

We will need to redouble our emphasis on this need for fairness. I've had this discussion with many local leaders and citizens. We will continue pushing the administration to recognize specific regional concerns and suggestions – and the need for sensible compromises and effective, safe resolutions.

There is enormous work facing us to fix what's broken and keep providing fundamental assistance. On the legislative front, we must continue to hear the voices of small business, farming, tourism, manufacturing and other foundations of local economies.

Coming out of this COVID-19 response and shutdown, these ongoing discussions, on a bipartisan basis, will become increasingly critical.

Since the beginning of the state shutdown in mid-March, a "One-Stop" webpage on omara.nysenate.gov has provided, in one place, access to a wide range of information and resources from across the spectrum of federal, state, and local agencies and organizations. This page will remain available as new guidelines, recommendations, and updates are continually issued.

Pay attention to them. As I have said repeatedly throughout these long months, one way we stay together is by staying informed.

Finally, as we begin this week that has traditionally had as its centerpiece a reflection on the year past, we focus on this: Thank You.

A single list here can never begin to cover them all, but let's keep foremost in our hearts and minds and prayers the doctors and nurses, all health care workers and first responders, public health departments, food banks, mail carriers, police officers, bus drivers and grocery store workers, transportation and sanitation crews, delivery drivers, long-haul truckers, service organizations, business leaders, bank and credit union employees, educators and librarians, farmers, government officials at every level, the men and women of our military, and an absolute army of other essential employees, neighbors, and, of course, incredibly selfless volunteers — throughout the public and private sectors – providing diligent public outreach, every day and every night.

Only because of these incredible and inspiring efforts have local communities been able to persevere, stay together, remain hopeful, move forward, and keep planning for better days.

They remain the rays of hope at the beginning of a New Year, the silver lining of strength that has and will keep seeing us through.

For all of them, let's all keep doing our part. Thank you, and may you and your families, friends, and neighbors be well and stay safe.

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