



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of February 28, 2022 ~ 'Taking back New York about to get more urgent'

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 28, 2022

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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, "Taking back New York about to get more urgent"

The month of March could end up marking a critical turning point in the future direction of New York State.

The Senate and Assembly Democrat supermajorities controlling the state Legislature will soon unveil “one-house budget bills” likely seeking to expand the already \$216-billion Executive Budget proposal put forth by Governor Kathy Hochul in January.

I’ve previously noted in this column that, if enacted, the governor’s proposal by itself -- already nearly \$5 billion higher than the current state budget – would jumpstart New York into the stratosphere of state budgets now and well into the future. It’s poised to go even higher after negotiations with a big-spending Legislature driven to remake New York as America’s most “progressive” state and with a glaring lack of commitment to fundamental priorities. Our state budget already rivals the size of the Florida and Texas state budgets *combined* – even though each of those states has a greater population and is growing while New York State has a continuing exodus due to the lack of affordability.

That’s a direction that will wind up shocking New York’s state and local taxpayers well into the future – particularly in a state already ranked the least affordable in the nation, with one of America’s heaviest tax and regulatory burdens, and with a national and global economic outlook that’s uncertain, at best.

Beyond the new state budget that will be negotiated throughout March, the hits could keep coming in other places.

Remember that a Farm Wage Board established by former Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Legislature’s Democrat majorities in 2019 has already recommended lowering the current farm worker overtime threshold from 60 hours to 40 hours. It’s a move that risks undermining the strength and vitality of many upstate communities, cultures, and economies for generations to come. Agriculture advocates like the New York Farm Bureau and Northeast Dairy Producers Association, together with many individual farmers, farm workers, farm leaders, and legislators including myself, remain strongly opposed.

It's in Governor Hochul's hands now and, to date, she shows no sign of turning back this progressive push to lower the overtime threshold.

The same goes for this governor and these legislative majorities moving at warp speed to remake the future of energy for businesses, communities, and residents through a "Climate Leadership and Climate Protection Act" (CLCPA) that lacks any serious or transparent cost-benefit analyses of its impact on feasibility, affordability, and reliability. Despite ongoing warnings that the public has no idea what's coming, New Yorkers will be stunned at what's in store for all of us in the very near future.

I'll simply reiterate here what I've been saying throughout the past few years: New York State is already an absolute leader in this arena, as we should be, accounting for just 0.4% of global carbon emissions. The Climate Act only applies to New York -- not to neighboring states, or to China, India or Russia, which account for 40% of global emissions. In other words, even if New York State does reach zero emissions, it will have zero impact on the global climate. It will come at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars and untold economic consequences, and it will surely further crush the affordability of living for families, drive up the expense of doing business, and limit economic opportunities even more.

Of course, let's never forget that most reasonable New Yorkers recognize that rising crime and violence, and weakened public safety and security, are the result of the pro-criminal policies being enacted and pushed by this state government under one-party Democrat control. A recent Siena College poll showed 65 percent of the state's voters want bail law amended and, furthermore, 91 percent believe that crime is a serious concern.

Nevertheless, Governor Hochul and Albany's legislative Democrats appear unrelenting in their ongoing embrace of failed bail reform, lenient parole policies, an out-of-control Parole Board, cowing to the "defund the police" movement, and an overall careless approach to criminal justice that simply continues to embolden the criminal element statewide.

It has been alarming to district attorneys, law enforcement officers, and criminal justice experts alike, and it shows no signs of letting up.

To mark the beginning of the 2022 legislative session -- one that I believe represents one of the truly pivotal sessions in modern history, with New York facing so many critical crossroads -- our Senate Republican Conference put forth a comprehensive set of goals to help grow local and state economies, focus on the financial challenges facing many middle-class families and small business owners, and make public safety an urgent priority.

It's called "Take Back New York."

From combating crime to job creation to tax relief, one-party control of New York State government has been a disaster for Upstate New York communities, economies, and taxpayers. This relentless pursuit of a far-left, extreme-liberal agenda appears to be the priority over a long-term, sustainable future for Upstate, middle-class communities, families, workers, businesses, industries, and taxpayers.

The overriding goals of Take Back New York 2022 would:

? Offer a safer and better quality of life for all New Yorkers by repealing bail reform and supporting law enforcement and crime victims, as well as expanding and ensuring access to quality education;

? Make New York more affordable for every resident by cutting the state's highest-in-the-nation tax burden and enacting a series of measures that lower the cost of living in New York;

? Develop a strong workforce for a strong economy through substantive training and development programs, a major commitment to family farms, and fostering quality and affordable child care for working parents;

? Improve the state's business climate and expand economic opportunity by cutting burdensome regulations, investing in physical infrastructure and broadband statewide, and moving toward a cleaner energy future;

? Ensure security for our vulnerable populations by securing funding for veterans, providing needed resources to seniors and their caregivers, combating the opioid crisis, and enhancing mental health programs and services; and

? Restore accountability to the state government in the aftermath of disgraced ex-Governor Andrew Cuomo's rampant abuses of executive power.

It's time to take back Upstate's rightful place and restore a more responsible and reasonable approach to governing.

You can read more about "Take Back New York" [HERE](#).

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