



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of December 5, 2022 -- 'Renewing the fight for more responsible government'

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 5, 2022

| ISSUE: **LEGISLATIVE SESSION**



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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, "Renewing the fight for more responsible government"

Approaching a new legislative session in January, we unfortunately continue to face the same set of challenges and crises that many of us fought to address at the beginning of 2022.

In other words, the agenda remains the same. We must stay committed to a comprehensive set of goals to help grow local and state economies, focus on the financial burdens facing middle-class families and small business owners, and make public safety an urgent priority.

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At the opening of the 2022 legislative session last January, when our Senate Republican Conference unveiled a "Take Back New York" agenda, I said, "New York remains one of the highest-taxed states in America. We are one of the most overregulated states in the nation. Our local governments and local property taxpayers continue to foot the bill for one of the country's heaviest burdens of unfunded state mandates. It's no coincidence that New York led the nation last year in overall tax burden and population loss. Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are heading for the exits. This state is at a crossroads and we must enact an across-the-board agenda to cut taxes, address affordability, and rebuild stronger and safer communities."

The exact sentiment rings true approaching 2023. This state continues to neglect critical shortcomings, including the need, among many others, to:

--offer a safer and better quality of life for all New Yorkers by repealing bail reform and supporting law enforcement, corrections officers, crime victims and communities as a whole;

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

--get New York off the bottom of the list of states in America with the worst business friendly climates;

--expand economic opportunity by cutting regulations and unfunded mandates, and refocusing on a revitalization of New York's manufacturing sector;

--provide equity and fairness in New York's ongoing investments in physical infrastructure and broadband;

--ensure greater security for vulnerable populations by addressing the needs of veterans, providing resources to seniors and caregivers, combating a still-rampant opioid epidemic, and enhancing mental health programs and services; and

--restore accountability, transparency, and local decision-making to New York government after nearly three years of unprecedented overreaches of executive power.

The upcoming legislative session once again presents a pivotal agenda. The state budget under one-party control, for example, has accelerated state spending at a massive rate -- for the first time, the state budget surpasses \$200 billion -- and raised taxes by billions. Could Governor Hochul and the Legislature's Democrat majorities eye yet another huge budgetary leap?

Will Governor Hochul continue refusing to change course on lowering the current farmworker overtime threshold from 60 hours to 40 hours? It's a move that risks changing the face of New York State agriculture as we have known it for generations.

In recent columns, I have likewise addressed the ongoing crisis in public safety and security, as well as a radical remaking of energy policy that lacks accountability, feasibility, or transparency.

It remains, in my view, an overriding priority to take back Upstate's rightful place in this government and restore a more responsible and reasonable approach to governing.

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