



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of February 13, 2023 -- 'Tune in to state budget adoption process'

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 13, 2023

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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, "Tune in to state budget adoption process"

Budget adoption season is underway at the State Capitol, which means, first, that joint Senate-Assembly public hearings on Governor Kathy Hochul's 2023-2024 Executive Budget proposal have started and will remain underway until March 1.

Conducted jointly by the Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, these forums examine and critique the governor's proposal in detail and solicit testimony from state agency officials, public policy and fiscal experts, local government representatives, business leaders, educators, farmers, law enforcement, and many other advocates.

I have served as the Ranking Member on the Finance Committee since 2021 and continue to welcome having a direct voice on the legislative committee most responsible for overseeing the adoption of the state's annual budget. These hearings highlight the course that New York's government is looking to set for short- and long-term fiscal practices and responsibilities. Equally important, the hearings begin setting the stage for the Legislature's negotiations with the governor over the final state budget.

They are a chance for the public to learn more about what's being planned by Governor Hochul and legislative leaders.

Remember that the governor has proposed a 2023-24 budget that starts at \$227 billion, already a *\$7 billion increase* over the current, record-setting \$220 billion budget. In other words, the governor and the Democrat leaders of the Senate and Assembly majorities will start final negotiations over a new state budget looking to increase state spending by at least \$7 billion -- and so it's likely to go significantly higher!

My initial reaction to the Hochul proposal stated, "Governor Hochul's proposed budget remains a spend, spend, spend strategy that shells out billions of taxpayer dollars but remains a billion miles away from making New York State more affordable for taxpayers. It largely ignores the reality that New York State remains one of America's highest-taxed, least affordable, most debt-ridden and overregulated states, and that we're leading the nation in population loss. The spending habits of this government under one-party, all-Democrat control can only make New York a more expensive place to live and do business. There is nothing in this plan that seriously addresses the need for lower taxes across the board, less regulation, debt reduction, mandate relief, or any of the other strangleholds on state and local taxpayers, small businesses and manufacturers, and continually hard-pressed upstate communities, economies, and workers."

Senate Republicans will continue to be a voice for lower taxes, less regulation, greater accountability, economic growth, job creation, and more common sense on state fiscal practices. I welcome the start of this year's budget hearings, at this critical time, to put a spotlight on a range of policies and programs that will decide the future and strength of our local communities and economies.

In my view, we need to keep working against a New York State tax and regulatory mindset that puts our businesses and manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage, imposes red tape that strangles local economies, or prioritizes higher and higher spending, overtaxing, outrageous mandates, and burdensome overregulation.

At the start of the new legislative session in early January, our Senate conference unveiled a "Rescue New York" legislative agenda that proposes a range of policies focusing on public safety and security, economic growth and job creation, tax relief and regulatory reform, and affordability initiatives to try to reverse New York's nation-leading population loss.

The Senate Republican analysis of Governor Hochul's proposed budget has been posted on my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov.

The first budget hearings were held last week and covered transportation, public protection, elementary and secondary education, economic development, and taxes. Archived videos of each hearing will be available on the state Senate website at www.nysenate.gov/events.

This week's hearings, beginning on Monday, February 13, will cover human services, environmental conservation, local/general government, and mental hygiene. They can be viewed on the Senate website listed above, or on www.omara.nysenate.gov.

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