



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of April 3, 2023 -- 'New York needs a 'Freedom Agenda''

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 3, 2023

| ISSUE: **RESCUE NEW YORK 2023 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA; AFFORDABILITY; PUBLIC SAFETY; ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**



Public safety is just one part of the story of how the past several years of one-party, all-Democrat control have produced what many of us view as a crisis of freedom in New York -- and why, among many consequences, New York continues to lead the nation in population loss as hundreds of thousands of residents relocate to states that are safer, more affordable, and more free from government overreach.

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, **"New York needs a 'Freedom Agenda'"**

New Yorkers across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions I represent, and statewide, are worried about the direction this state government keeps heading under one-party, all-Democrat, extremely liberal control. We see New York becoming less safe, less affordable, less economically competitive, less responsible, and far less free and hopeful for the future.

As many of us see it, the most important work facing this state is an agenda to rebuild, restore, and rescue New York. Last week at the Capitol, Albany Democrats presided over a late state budget. They took negotiations entirely behind closed doors, however appear headed toward the state's highest-ever spending spree. Our Senate Republican conference delivered a different message: We need to rebuild respect for the Constitution, restore legislative checks and balances, get out from under extreme executive control, and reestablish the importance of local decision-making.

A recent statewide Siena poll found that 92% of New Yorkers view crime as a serious problem, yet Albany Democrats continue to resist admitting the failure of soft-on-crime policies like bail reform and, in fact, continue to push policies that will put more dangerous criminals back on the street.

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In fact, government overreach may be an understatement. Let's not forget that beginning in March 2020 under former Governor Andrew Cuomo and continuing right through the current Hochul administration, this state has been under extreme executive control. Throughout this COVID-dominated era of government, more than 100 Executive Orders have unilaterally changed hundreds of state laws, implemented rules and regulations, and authorized hundreds of millions of dollars in spending decisions, largely in the absence of legislative approval or local decision-making. Many of these executive orders remain in place. Should they all stay in effect? Is it time to repeal the state's unnecessary, COVID-19-related rules, mandates, and dictates?

Furthermore, as I have said numerous times over the past few years, New Yorkers already bearing a heavy burden for state government mandates imposed under extreme executive control throughout the COVID-19 pandemic better be ready for much more of the same, and then some, if Governor Hochul and the Albany Democrat energy mandates keep marching forward. They are clearly willing to consider whatever tax it takes, to sacrifice jobs, and to grant unilateral authority to the executive branch to keep moving forward on this radical plan as rapidly as possible.

Our call for a “Freedom Agenda” in New York is a core tenet of the Senate Republican “Rescue New York” 2023 legislative agenda unveiled at the start of this year’s legislative session.

Deputy Senate Republican Leader Andrew Lanza put it this way last week: “New Yorkers deserve to live in a state where they are free -- free to walk down safe streets, free to make the choices they feel are best for their families, free to decide how to heat their home and cook their food, free to exercise their constitutional rights, and free from crushing taxes and overreaching government that hampers their quality of life.”

Among numerous others, priorities to help create a more free New York State should include:

--fighting crime, supporting law enforcement and crime victims, and restoring public safety and security as one of the state’s highest responsibilities;

--making New York more affordable by cutting the state’s highest-in-the-nation tax burden and one of the country’s heaviest burdens of debt and unfunded state mandates;

--refusing the continuation of out-of-control government spending;

--rethinking and slowing down a process to quickly implement radical energy mandates that ignore affordability, reliability, and sustainability;

--truly transforming the state-local partnership and restoring the importance of local decision-making;

--refusing to take any actions that add to the burden or jeopardize the future of New York’s family farms;

--finally, fully, and honestly engaging in a reassessment of New York’s COVID response, including its tragic failures and shortcomings, especially within the state’s nursing homes; and

--restoring accountability to state government in the aftermath of rampant abuses of executive power.

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