



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of May 22, 2022 -- 'Welcome to New York's border crisis'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 22, 2023

| ISSUE: **MIGRANT CRISIS**



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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, "Welcome to New York's border crisis"

For all of us, the crisis at the nation's southern border is no longer just a story on the nightly news. And if you still don't think the migrant crisis could be headed our way across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, it's time to take off the blindfolds.

"New York is now a border state," Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt said last week at a Capitol news conference, where we gathered to propose steps to counteract its potential impact on communities statewide. He's right.

For the moment, set aside the finger pointing, and the cultural and partisan divides that have surrounded immigration policy for years now, producing nothing but gridlock in Washington and political grandstanding everywhere else. Instead, focus on what's happening on the ground in New York City and, slowly but surely, finding its way throughout the state.

Since last spring, New York City has received an influx of at least 60,000 migrants. It is already overwhelming the city's ability to find housing and provide social services. New York City Mayor Eric Adams has declared it out of control and projects it will already cost the city at least \$4 billion.

I'll remind you that, long ago, New York City declared itself a sanctuary city. They opened their arms to shelter undocumented immigrants. They asked for it and they should not, now, push their self-created problem to areas of the state that did not. Nor should we be footing the bill for it.

In other words, it's just the beginning here in New York State. The recently enacted state budget included a billion dollars to help the city respond. That's right, state taxpayers are already footing the bill and, consequently, it seems fair to ask all of the who, what, when, where, and why questions underpinning this worsening crisis.

That's what our Republican conference started doing last week. In a letter to Governor Hochul we wrote, "We are gravely concerned by the lack of transparency around the placement of migrants throughout our state ... Specifically, we would like to know how long migrants will be housed for, where specifically they will be housed, how much is being paid for their housing, and what services they are receiving and for how long. We also request that information about potentially moving migrants is communicated from you or your administration directly to the municipalities."

The city of New York is already shipping hundreds of newly arrived migrants to hotels, motels, and other makeshift shelters in nearby, suburban counties. Reports have surfaced that Governor Hochul is eyeing other locations around the state including, for example, dormitories on State University of

New York campuses.

Our immediate focus falls, once again, on the lack of transparency coming out of the Hochul administration. The governor recently said, “It’s no surprise that there will literally be thousands of more individuals coming across the border and ultimately finding their way to the state of New York.”

That’s exactly the point, governor: We don’t want any surprises but we’re suspicious that your administration is going to be full of surprises moving forward. Localities share this suspicion, including a number of counties across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions that have declared states of emergency hoping to head off any surprises from the state.

Governor Hochul and her Democrat, New York City allies in the Legislature appear ready and willing to once again override local decision making -- just like they did throughout the COVID-19 pandemic -- and begin shipping migrants all over New York. In fact, right now, it looks like the only plan on their table.

Our Republican conference believes that localities must have the ability to say no. Furthermore, we don’t believe the state can randomly displace homeless New Yorkers, families of domestic violence, or other vulnerable populations from their current places of shelter just to make room for migrants being bused out of New York City. We have introduced legislation, which I co-sponsor, to achieve each of these goals.

“Local elected officials should have the option to decline hosting migrants in their communities should they not have the necessary accommodations and other resources," we wrote to the governor.

Welcome to New York’s border crisis.

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