

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

53<sup>rd</sup> District

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# Press Release

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## **O'Mara: Fiscal crisis, upstate economy, property tax relief must top Legislature's 2011 agenda**

*Welcomes Cuomo's call for bipartisan action, focus on deficit*

**Albany, N.Y., January 5**— “From private-sector job growth to property tax relief, the decline of the upstate economy and so many upstate communities demands top billing in 2011,” State Senator Tom O’Mara (R-C, Big Flats) said today in response to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s first State of the State message to the Legislature.

O’Mara, beginning his first term representing New York’s 53<sup>rd</sup> Senate District, joined his Senate and Assembly colleagues in the Empire State Plaza’s Convention Center for Cuomo’s address – the official kickoff to the 2011 legislative session. Today’s event marked the first time in 86 years that the speech wasn’t delivered in the Assembly Chamber, a move Cuomo made to allow for greater public attendance.

O’Mara said that Cuomo was right to focus today’s remarks on this year’s across-the-board recognition at the Capitol of the seriousness of New York’s fiscal crisis and the overriding need to immediately start getting it under control. The governor pegged the state’s budget deficit at approximately \$10 billion.

“There’s no denying the seriousness and the difficulty of this fiscal crisis. It’s going to take unprecedented political cooperation to finally right this ship,” O’Mara said.

O’Mara said that while working with the new governor and his legislative colleagues to address the deficit tops this year’s list of priorities, he also stressed the importance of redirecting Albany’s attention to the specific plight of upstate property taxpayers, upstate communities, and upstate employers.

“Upstate concerns have been ignored over the past few years. It has to change. Private-sector economic growth can help us through this fiscal storm, and we especially need to start doing better for upstate,” O’Mara said. “What can we do to help jump-start the upstate economy and produce more upstate jobs? It’s one of the key questions that have to be answered in 2011.”

In addition to economic development, property tax relief, and state spending reform, O’Mara pointed to several other issues that will demand attention in the new year, including refocusing state-level efforts to prevent the loss of potentially billions of state taxpayer dollars through waste and fraud in New York’s system of Medicaid. It’s an issue that O’Mara knows well, having served as chairman of the Assembly Republican Task Force on Medicaid Waste, Fraud and Abuse during his tenure as an area assemblyman from 2005 until his election to the Senate last fall.

The key test arrives in February when Cuomo unveils his 2011-2012 state budget proposal. O’Mara said that state budgets during the two years of the Paterson administration relied on spending a huge influx of federal stimulus dollars, significant cost shifts to local governments, and unprecedented increases in state taxes and fees.

“It was a two-year budget cycle that was incredibly tough on our local taxpayers, employers, workers and families. We can’t stand a repeat performance,” O’Mara said.