

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

53rd District

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2011

O'MARA: PUBLIC CAN PROVIDE DIRECT INPUT ON GOVERNOR'S MEDICAID REFORM EFFORT

Cuomo unveils new Medicaid redesign website, invites ideas and suggestions for change

Albany, N.Y., January 10—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) is encouraging area taxpayers, local leaders, and health care professionals to take advantage of Governor Andrew Cuomo's invitation to provide direct input on reforming New York's system of Medicaid.

In his State of the State message last week, Cuomo announced the appointment of New York's first-ever Medicaid Director, Jason Helgeson, a health finance professional from Wisconsin who successfully led that state's reform effort. Helgeson is heading up what's being called a Medicaid Redesign Team that began working late last week and plans to issue its recommendations by March 1st so that they can be considered as part of the 2011-2012 state budget.

As part of that effort, earlier today in Albany Cuomo unveiled a new website (<http://governor.ny.gov/medicaidredesign>) that he said will allow the public to stay updated on the team's work and, most importantly, provide a place for public input.

"If we're going to get serious about state spending control, we have to get serious about Medicaid reform," said O'Mara. "My legislative colleagues and I will be sharing our own ideas about getting this system under control. But local leaders, health care professionals, and taxpayers from across our region have long advocated and implemented meaningful Medicaid reforms. Now there's an opportunity for all of us to directly share these ideas and suggestions for change with our new governor, and we should. The more we can encourage grassroots participation in this effort, the better."

As a first step late last week, O'Mara sent a letter to Cuomo welcoming the governor's emphasis on Medicaid reform and offering the area's cooperation in bringing about a long-overdue restructuring of the system. O'Mara also took the opportunity in his letter to highlight successful Medicaid reform efforts locally, particularly under the leadership of Chemung County Executive Tom Santulli, and urged the new governor to take them into account as models of effective, results-driven change.

Prior to his election to the state Senate last fall, O'Mara represented Chemung and Schuyler counties in the Assembly beginning in 2005. During his tenure in the Assembly, he served as chairman of the Assembly Republican Task Force on Medicaid Waste, Fraud, and Abuse.