

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

53rd District

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Guest Column

for the week of January 10, 2011

"Beginning my Senate service"

The economic and fiscal challenges may be as daunting as they've ever been in New York State, but there has never been a more important time to serve.

When I finally took the Oath of Office and was sworn in as the New York State Senator representing our 53rd Senate District, one thought kept running through my mind: this is a real opportunity to get to work on the ground floor of turning this state around. That pinpoints the key challenge facing this year's class of state legislators – and there are many of us serving in new capacities in both houses of the Legislature – and it will ultimately be the barometer of our success. Can we, finally, begin to right the ship? Can we, finally, take advantage of the opportunity for a fresh start in New York State?

When I reflect on the beginning of my first term in the Senate, I keep recalling that time-honored, often-repeated, common sense bit of wisdom: "Out of adversity comes opportunity."

That simply couldn't be truer in New York State in 2011, and I'm hopeful about the work ahead of this new Legislature to truly begin reforming so many of the practices of state government, and to revitalize key New York State commitments. This work started in earnest when Governor Andrew Cuomo delivered his first State of the State message on January 5th – and the governor further sets the stage with his first state budget proposal in February.

First, however, let me say that I'm very honored to succeed my good friend and one of the outstanding public servants this region will ever know, former Senator George Winner, whose remarkable career spanned four decades and produced a long list of enduring achievements.

I'm enormously honored for this opportunity to represent all of you and I'm looking forward to the opportunities we will have to work together to improve the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. And let me emphasize *together*. Our communities are most effective when we join forces, so I'm eager for the opportunities ahead to become acquainted at a community meeting, through a local project, or in pursuit of common goals. I'll be doing my best to provide as many of these opportunities as possible, because I believe that above all else it's time to return to the fundamentals of good government, a list that always begins with open, honest, straightforward give-and-take between elected officials and those they represent.

So here at the beginning of my Senate service, priority No. 1 is to carry on a tradition of accessibility and teamwork in representing the communities of the 53rd Senate District. I believe it's long been a valuable and effective tradition for our constituents, and I'll be working closely with all of our local Assembly representatives, as well as with the local leaders whose efforts are central to the quality of our counties, towns and villages.

My Senate service will focus on fundamental principles. Accessibility to those you represent. Responsibility to the taxpayers. Economic and fiscal soundness. I will be doing everything I possibly can to build on this bedrock of effective government, and I'm grateful for the opportunity.