



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of October 9, 2023 -- 'A freeze on state spending won't cut it now'

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 9, 2023

| ISSUE: **NEW YORK STATE SPENDING**

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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, **"A freeze on state spending won't cut it now"**

ALBANY, Oct. 9, 2023 -- The following lead paragraph in one news story last week speaks volumes about where things have been and where we're headed in New York government: "After two years of record spending by her administration, Gov. Kathy Hochul has ordered a budget freeze at state agencies."

That was the word out of Albany last week, that the governor was ordering state agencies to keep spending flat in the coming year because New York, as I've noted here in recent weeks, faces mounting state budget deficits of up to \$40 billion cumulatively over the next three years.

"That is not the path that we can continue on," the governor declared last week, adding that it's time to "stabilize and be realistic."

Now we need to be realistic? Now we need spending restraint? Where has she been? Let's be clear, it's been far more than "two years of record spending" under Governor Hochul. As I've said many times over the past several years, her tenure has been defined (and will always be defined) as an era when Albany Democrats went ahead and spent the roof off the state Capitol. It's been an alarming, out-of-control, irresponsible spending binge the likes of which we have never seen in this state.

Remember some of the details: Their final, \$230 billion state budget this year is the largest-ever state spending plan. It's merely the latest chapter, though, under all-Democrat control when Governor Hochul and the Legislature's Democrat majorities have carelessly thrown taxpayer dollars to the wind. They added \$8 billion this year alone. New York State's budget in 2018, the last year that Republicans held the majority in the state Senate, totaled \$170 billion. Following this year's budget, state spending has increased nearly *\$60 billion*, or approaching 40%, over the last five years. This outrageous growth in spending alone is larger than the entire budgets of 35 states. This year's total budget is larger than the combined budgets of Texas and Florida (each of which has more population than New York State) and it spends more than 1.5 times per capita than California (which is twice the population of New York State).

There has been zero restraint on their part despite the warnings from many of us that the bill would come due sooner or later and when it does, it's going to be yet another hard hit for taxpayers, local economies, and communities in every corner of this state.

The bill is coming due sooner, not later. And the alarming fact is that even if Governor Hochul freezes state spending at current levels, it would only save approximately \$1 billion, not nearly enough to even begin closing what's anticipated to be a \$9.1 billion deficit next year. What about the year after that, when we're projected to face an almost \$14 billion budget gap? And the following year when projections show another shortfall of upwards of \$13 billion?

And that's all before having to address the migrant crisis, the cost of far-reaching energy mandates, a multi-billion-dollar Unemployment Insurance debt, rising Medicaid costs, and all the other new spending commitments we're locked into thanks to the Albany Democrat spending spree.

The point is that Governor Hochul's nod to the need for spending restraint won't begin to cut it now. She and her Democrat allies knew it and ignored their responsibility to stop spending all along like there would be no tomorrow. As many of us warned, it has set up a future, beginning next year, of depleting state reserve funds, spending cuts, higher taxes, more fees, and skyrocketing debt for every New Yorker.

It's a fiscal and economic mess and the Albany Democrats are surely going to want to make you pay for it. That is not acceptable.

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