



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of September 16, 2024 -- 'What are we waiting for?'

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 16, 2024



Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

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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, **"What are we waiting for?"**

Over the past few months in New York State government, we've witnessed constant reminders why this state is headed in the wrong direction under one-party, all-Democrat control, with no turnaround in sight.

**Exhibit A: Energy mandates.** Serious doubts have been expressed, from many quarters, on the affordability, feasibility, and reliability of New York's current clean energy strategy. A July report from the Hochul administration itself admitted that their timeline to achieve 70 percent renewable energy by 2030 and zero emissions by 2040 can't be met under the current plan. Shortly thereafter, a state comptroller's audit concluded that the implementation of the Democrats' climate agenda has been seriously flawed and its true costs remain unknown.

**Exhibit B: COVID-19.** Earlier this summer, a long-awaited (and long-delayed) report commissioned two years ago by Governor Hochul -- a report that was supposed to be a comprehensive, honest, transparent reassessment of New York's COVID-19 response -- was determined to be worthless.

The Albany-based Empire Center for Public Policy, in a review of the report titled "Hochul's Pandemic Study is a \$4.3 Million Flop," concluded: "Hochul had commissioned a \$4.3 million after-action review of the crisis, saying she wanted it to cover 'the good, the bad and the ugly' and bolster the state's preparedness for future outbreaks. Yet the 262-page report from the Olson Group, a Virginia-based consulting firm, turns out to be thinly researched, poorly argued, ill-informed, sloppily presented and marred by obvious errors. Although many of its findings ring true, it glosses over or ignores some of the state's most questionable actions -- such as ordering thousands of Covid-positive patients into nursing homes."

More recently, former Governor Andrew Cuomo publicly testified before a Congressional Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic and delivered more of the same song and dance on his administration's execution of the COVID response. It's a song and dance that has long been tainted by stonewalling, misinformation, coverups, and outright lies.

This was the most devastating public health crisis New York State ever faced and yet, because of

continued stonewalling from both the Cuomo and Hochul administrations, in concert with an all-Democrat Legislature that has remained unwilling to accept the responsibility, we have not yet taken a full accounting of the response -- its costs, its shortcomings, its outright failures, what worked and what did not, who was responsible and who wasn't, what actions should remain in place going forward and what needs to be scrapped immediately. The longer the reassessment of the response is delayed, the more the effectiveness of New York's future responses is jeopardized and weakened.

**Exhibit C: Border crisis.** The illegal migrant crisis in New York remains as out of control and costly as ever. Ten billion taxpayer dollars already spent on the Sanctuary City and State Democrats' self-induced crisis. Now they're paying migrants \$4,000 of your tax dollars to move out of shelters.

In early January, I summed up the condition of New York State at that time with the following: "We face an affordability crisis. We face a border crisis. Law and order are in free fall. The Albany Democrat direction for New York simply fails to produce any hope for a long-term, sustainable future for communities, families, workers, businesses, industries, and taxpayers. New York is a state in decline that continues to become less safe, less free, less affordable, less economically competitive, less responsible, and far less strong for the future. We are at a dangerous crossroads, and we must enact an across-the-board agenda to rebuild stronger and safer communities."

The same assessment and sentiment hold true nine months later. We need a redirection of New York's priorities and resources to begin addressing unmet challenges and crises. We need to start charting a course for a more sensible and sustainable state government focused on priorities that include:

--a better quality of life for all New Yorkers by restoring public safety and security as one of the State's highest responsibilities;

--making New York more affordable by cutting one of the nation's highest tax and debt burdens;

--putting a strict cap on State government spending that threatens to make the nation's highest population losses even worse;

--rethinking a process underway to quickly implement energy mandates that ignore affordability, feasibility, and sustainability;

- transforming the State-local partnership by making good on a promise made over a decade ago to address the practice of unfunded State mandates;
- finally, fully, and honestly reassessing New York's COVID response, including its failures and shortcomings, to be better prepared in the future;
- continue to protect and strengthen our Second Amendment and other Constitutional rights and freedoms; and
- restoring local decision-making and addressing abuses of executive power at the state level.

**What are we waiting for?**

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