



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of November 18, 2024 -- 'Government spending and waste demands attention'

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| ISSUE: **AFFORDABILITY; HIGH TAXES; 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, **"Government spending and waste demands attention"**

In New York State, and especially in Washington D C., the post-election landscape continues to reverberate with the hope for change and a turnaround the likes of which we haven't seen in a long, long time.

We'll see. But, for many, at least the hope appears that how we govern, the priorities we set, and the direction that we envision for the future matters.

In one of the Siena Research Institute's final statewide surveys of New Yorkers just prior to Election Day, less than a third of respondents believed that our state was headed in the right direction. They felt the same way about the direction of the country.

"This is the most pessimistic New Yorkers have been about the direction of the state in at least a decade," the Siena analysis concluded.

Pessimism has simmered in every corner of this state for years. It's coming to a boil on many fronts. A border crisis. A crisis of violent crime. High taxes and overregulation. Nation leading population loss spurred by New York's lack of affordability.

And let's not forget the impact of a state government that can't (or won't) stop spending taxpayer dollars like there's no tomorrow.

On that front, this focus on government spending and waste -- and the consequences it brings to the lives of every single citizen, not to mention the quality and vitality of government programs and services -- may be one of the most encouraging efforts already underway by the incoming Trump administration.

We can rest assured that a federal government run amok on decades of overspending is a prime target for reform. It's long overdue and it will bear watching for every state in America -- nowhere more so, however, than right here in New York.

Late last April, Governor Hochul and the Legislature's all-Democrat majorities put the finishing touches on the most expensive state budget in New York's history. Yet it marked just the latest in a string of continually escalating state spending plans over the past six years in this state under one-party control.

The numbers are startling and bear repeating: 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 nearly

\$240 billion budget, state spending has increased approximately \$70 billion, or upwards of 40%. In their relentless pursuit of a misguided, questionable, unsustainable political agenda, Albany Democrats have simply and carelessly thrown caution (right along with taxpayer dollars) to the wind. There's no other way to say it.

Fiscal watchdogs, including the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), have warned that the future could be dire, and that New York's structural deficit could exceed \$16 billion in the 2028 fiscal year alone.

Back in April, in my capacity as the Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, I called the latest state fiscal plan "the most bloated and wasteful government budget in America."

Consequently, we will be wise to keep an eye on the work of the newly designated Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) getting to work on the federal bureaucracy and its wasteful ways. It's not a new idea but it may be carried out in a way that's never been done before. It could show states that could stand a similar scrubbing, like New York, that it can be done.

Again, we'll see. But there's no longer denying that the effort is desperately needed -- in Washington and in New York.

As many of us have said many times over the past several years, this era in New York government has been defined (and will forever be defined) as an era when Albany Democrats went ahead and spent the roof off the state Capitol. It's been alarming. It's been out of control. It's been irresponsible. Their outrageous growth in spending alone is larger than the entire budgets of 35 states.

There has been zero restraint.

New York State taxpayers today and long into the future already face trying to afford, live, and work under one of the most bloated and wasteful governments in America. It's a government that will go on squeezing every penny possible from state and local taxpayers through higher taxes, passing the buck to localities, ignoring badly needed priorities, more borrowing, raiding reserve funds, increasing fees, and every other anti-taxpayer, anti-business, anti-economic opportunity, anti-economic growth, anti-freedom action that will be the cornerstone of every future state budget -- unless more and more of us keep standing up and demanding a stop to it.

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