



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Public Forum Notice

MALCOLM A. SMITH November 30, 2008



New York State is facing unprecedented fiscal challenges that must be approached in an honest, straightforward, and practical manner.

The great economic turmoil of the past 15 months has damaged the housing, banking, and financial service sectors, and well as the State Financial Plan. State revenues have dropped considerably, and the entire state economy is facing a significant downturn and possible structural changes.

It is now widely accepted that New York's financial service sector will lose at least upwards of 225,000 jobs during 2008 through 2009, fifteen times higher than previous estimates. Unfortunately, it is also widely recognized that job losses in the financial services sector translate into further large-scale job losses outside of this sector.

Declining state revenues will require concomitant reductions in state expenditures, and clear-eyed reassessment of sustainable funding for state programs in the future will be required.

Senate Democrats recognize that we will be faced with the need to cut \$2 billion in January while addressing an additional \$13 billion in needed cuts for 2009-10. We also recognize the value of our state's health, education and social services infrastructure in providing necessary services to

all New Yorkers and ensuring the economic vitality of our state. We also recognize the need to keep state services strong during difficult economic times, when more New Yorkers will rely on public-sector services than ever before.

New York State Senate Democrats are soliciting feedback regarding the current and future budgets and capital expenditures in the areas of Health, Education, Higher Education, and Social Services. Interested parties are welcome to testify on their perspective towards proposed cuts, on budget priorities, and on recommendations for savings and revenue sources as our state moves through these difficult times together.

Persons wishing to present pertinent testimony at the above forums should complete and return the enclosed reply form as soon as possible. It is important that the reply form be fully completed and returned so that persons may be notified in the event of emergency postponement or cancellation.

Oral testimony will be limited to 5 to 10 minutes in duration. In preparing the order of witnesses, event organizers will attempt to accommodate individual requests to speak at particular times in order to accommodate special circumstances. These requests should be made on the attached reply form or communicated to the event contact person as early as possible.

Issues to Which Witnesses May Direct Their Testimony

- What local institutions, individuals, groups or interests may be especially vulnerable to budget cuts in the areas of Health, Education, Higher Education, and Social Services?
- What other alternatives exist to mitigate proposed cuts?
- Are there areas of the budget where cuts could be made that have not previously been explored?
- Are there areas where the delivery of public services can be made more effective or efficient?
- What cost savings are possible and realistic for non-profit and governmental service providers?

- What are the long term effects and any potential unintended costs of implementing cuts such as those proposed by the Governor?
- What steps could be taken to ensure a sustainable revenue and financing structure for the future?

Statewide membership organizations are encouraged to provide this hearing notice to local members and affiliates in the areas where hearings are scheduled.

REPLY FORM