



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Calls On Governor To Rethink Highway Signs

JAMES L. SEWARD July 14, 2009

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION**

ONEONTA, 07/14/09 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) is calling on the governor to stop wasting taxpayer money on needless road signs marking American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects.

“A plan to post specially designed road signs identifying economic stimulus project work sites is a complete waste of taxpayer dollars,” said Senator Seward. **“I thought the idea behind the stimulus money was to get people back to work, not promote government. These signs are simply a shameless plug that wastes the public’s money. Try explaining to an out of work father or mother or a small businessman trying to afford health insurance for his employees how a big green sign is helping stimulate the economy.”**

According to the state published engineering instructions, the largest signs will cost between \$6,000 and \$8,300 each to produce and install. In all, an estimated \$1 million will be spent on nearly 500 signs. The state Department of Transportation says the signs aren't mandatory, but "strongly suggested" by the federal government.

“Other states are producing signage at a fraction of the cost New York is estimating,” Seward continued. **“This is just another example of government waste and one of the reasons why we have a record spending state budget and skyrocketing taxes. I am calling on the governor to look for less expensive alternatives or to scrap the plan altogether.**

“I am all for transparency, as a matter of fact, I have been calling for a better accounting of how stimulus dollars are being spent since the money came flooding in to New York. But throwing away money on promotional billboards is not the way to go about informing the public,” Seward concluded.

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The complete letter from Senator Seward to Governor Paterson is attached.

July 13, 2009

The Honorable David A. Paterson
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

I am writing to express my concern about the planned highway signs that will be posted at federal economic stimulus project sites.

It is my understanding that, at the encouragement of the Federal Highway Administration, the state will be posting signs at work sites which will cost between \$6,000 and \$8,300 each for the largest signs. While I do not object to the placing of signage per se, I do have serious concerns with the exorbitant cost of each sign and believe it is a fiscally irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars.

You have publicly stated many times that shared sacrifice is necessary and that we must all “share the pain” in order to overcome the fiscal crisis, a sentiment which I certainly agree with. It is outrageous and hypocritical to waste hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on unnecessary signage, while at the same time insisting that struggling families and businesses in New York “share the pain.”

Michigan and Illinois were able to create similar signs for only \$300 and \$500 each, respectively, so clearly it is possible to have the signs made at a lower cost. I would urge you to do some further research and think creatively about ways to bring down the cost of the signs, or, simply scrap the plans altogether. I am sure that it is entirely possible to spread the word about the federal stimulus projects through existing media channels.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to hearing your reply.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. SEWARD

State Senator