



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Stephen M. Saland

Money must be growing on trees at the State Capitol

STEPHEN M. SALAND August 12, 2009

The Governor released details today of a “Back to School” bonus program that would give \$200 per child to families on welfare or food stamps. The public money amounting to roughly \$140 million is coming from the Federal Stimulus Plan.

“The Governor did not publicly discuss this plan prior to his announcement, nor did he solicit legislative approval,” said Senator Saland. “In what is fast becoming this Governor’s modus operandi, he prefers to exclude the public and other elected officials from weighing in on proposals that they may find fault with. If Governor Paterson wants to assure that children will have the tools they need to start school, there are certainly better ways to achieve that goal.”

The new welfare give away was reportedly outlined in an internal memo from the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance. According to the memo, the grants would be available through ATM cards with no requirements of whether a child was enrolled or attending school and provides no conditions that money is even spent on a child.

The Governor is earmarking \$140 million in public money to support a program that holds no one accountable while the State is facing a \$2.1 billion budget shortfall. At the same time, the State Budget opposed by every Senate Republican contained \$8.5 billion in new taxes and fees and stripped the STAR rebate from homeowners who are struggling to make ends meet. “ This money could be used to ease the tax burden on hard working New Yorkers who have been forced to shoulder the costs of the tax and spend budget rammed through by the three

leaders of this State – all of whom are Democrats from New York City,” said Senator Saland. “Among others, I’m sure homeowners whose utility bills were increased by that budget, as well as motorists whose motor vehicle fees were similarly increased, would have welcomed those monies being used for tax relief,” Saland continued.

“It is unfathomable to those of us who believed the Stimulus Funds were there to stimulate the economy that the Governor would propose such an outlandish plan. Handing out money with no regard for welfare reform which established a link between benefits and responsible behavior is not only reckless, but illustrates once again the Governor is missing an opportunity to turn this State’s economy around,” concluded Senator Saland.