



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

NYS SENATE UPSTATE CAUCUS AND LONG ISLAND DELEGATION STAND FIRM ON DRP POSITIONS: Upstate, Long Island Coalition Stands to Protect Schools & Constituents from Haphazard Cuts

DARREL J. AUBERTINE November 16, 2009

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In light of their shared concern on Upstate and Suburban property taxes, healthcare and education, the Senate Majority Upstate Caucus (Senators Aubertine, Chair; Breslin; Stachowski; Thompson; Valesky) has partnered with the Senators from Long Island, Senators Brian X Foley and Craig Johnson to steer DRP negotiations sensitive to the anticipated impact of the Governor's proposed cuts throughout Upstate and Long Island.

In continued negotiations, the Caucus has cited the inevitability of irreparable harm to the Upstate and Long Island constituents and their regional economies.

Analysis of the proposed education cuts show just within the 12 counties represented by the 7-members, is a loss of over \$230 million dollars in education funding, a drop of nearly 3.75% from what was anticipated.

The Caucus maintains this type of hit mid-year is simply unacceptable. Facing such funding losses would certainly force districts into layoffs, increased class sizes, and property tax increases. Above all else the Caucus remains committed to protecting Upstaters and Long

Islanders from property tax increases.

The formula used to calculate these cuts puts a disproportionate burden on those areas outside New York City. The five boroughs would only lose 2.6 percent of their aid – a full percentage lower than the 12 counties, and well below the state-wide average of 3.2 percent. This imbalance places more of the burden on upstate and suburban communities, instead of balancing the cut across the state.

The Caucus also believes the magnitude of the Executive's proposed healthcare cuts are untenable. While the Caucus recognizes the need for cuts, and the fiscal realities of the State's budget, we need responsible cost cutting and reform that allows waste to be removed from the system without sacrificing service delivery, quality care and responsiveness to the needs of its constituents.

In addition, the Caucus and Delegation strongly advocate for the reversal of the new 2010 license plate mandate; additional research or formal initiatives related to investigating better practices in Medicaid services and delivery; a prohibition of unfunded mandates on local governments; and opposition of any measure that directly raises property taxes.

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“There is no doubt that we all recognize the need to make cuts and the severity of this fiscal crisis,” Senator Darrel Aubertine said. “However, the Upstate Caucus, in working with our colleagues on Long Island, is committed to protecting the interests of our constituents, which means guarding against cuts that are disproportionate to the areas we represent and would force local governments to raise property taxes. This fiscal crisis is real and everything must be on the table, but in the end, we need to share the sacrifice evenly across this state because

in emerging from this crisis, we will need a strong Upstate economy to ensure we avoid repeating this scenario.”

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"Without making it look like an "us versus them" proposal, I think it is vitally important that the Senators outside of the metropolitan New York area realize that upstate residents need to be assured that we will not take any budget actions which will increase their property taxes or lessen their ability to receive top-notch health care" said Senator William Stachowski, the Chairman of the Senate Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business Committee.

"We also need to point out that many of our health care facilities, already facing difficulties as a result of the Berger Commission mandates, cannot afford to have HEAL-NY funding delayed in any manner. People need to know that the proposed cuts in health care would mean serious shortfalls for Roswell Park, the new vascular center in the medical corridor and numerous layoffs for those who care for our sick and elderly in clinics and nursing homes."

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"While we are ready to agree to most of the proposed cuts, as difficult as these may be, we must be careful not to adopt deficit reduction solutions that simply shift costs down to local property tax-payers," said Senate Vice President Pro Tempore David J. Valesky. "That is why

I, along with my colleagues from across Upstate and Long Island, are holding strong to the position that mid-year school cuts will not have our support. We will also be working in the coming days to make certain that cuts in healthcare and elsewhere do not unfairly impact our communities."

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"While we all realize the fiscal problems that exist within our state, we must stay committed to providing the funding to education that school districts are counting on, and to providing a responsible level of funding for healthcare," said Senator Brian X. Foley. "Cutting too deep into these essential services mid-year would be devastating. We have a responsibility to look for other areas where spending can be cut or revenue can be generated, that will not add fees or raise taxes."

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"There is no doubt that cuts have to be made now and structural changes need to be achieved in preparation for when federal stimulus funds dry up in the 2011-2012 budget," said Senator Craig M. Johnson, "However, these mid-stream reductions cannot be made on the backs of Long Island and Upstate taxpayers. We are committed to working with our partners in government to ensure that this deficit is reduced in a way that is fair and equitable to residents across New York State."

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