



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Governor's Mta Plan: Adding Insult to Injury

STEPHEN M. SALAND February 17, 2010

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Finally, the Governor admits that the MTA payroll tax HE advanced is indeed unfair. From the point the Ravitch Commission was released (December, 2008) recommending a payroll tax, I objected to the proposal and requested that the Senate Democrat leadership hold hearings in the Hudson Valley so our region could be heard. Despite repeated efforts to have the Governor and the Senate Democrats listen to reason, they turned a deaf ear on every taxpayer in the counties of Dutchess, Putnam, Orange and Rockland.

Joining together with local businesses, chambers of commerce, local government officials and not-for-profits, we deluged the Governor and Senate leadership with letters and petitions in opposition to the payroll tax. I offered detailed analysis as to why the counties of Dutchess, Putnam, Orange and Rockland should not be taxed at the same rate as New York City given the low ridership, limited service and even more limited benefits available in these counties.

My requests for a hearing were ignored; my passionate pleas to have just one Senate Democrat listen to reason and vote against this atrocity were ignored; and the Governor ignored the taxpayers of our counties when he shut the Senate Republicans out of the negotiations on the MTA bail-out bill.

I urged the Democrat leadership to hold the MTA accountable for their long history of fiscal mismanagement by requiring a forensic audit before any bail-out measure was considered. Again, my well-reasoned position was ignored. Any suburban senator within the MTA region

that voted for this outrageous and egregious tax betrayed their constituents (and every one of our Democrat colleagues from Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk did just that).

Now, the Governor is explaining that he has had a revelation and admits the payroll tax that he recommended and signed into law is UNFAIR to the taxpayers living outside the city of New York.

Does this Governor really think he can convince the Senate and Assembly Democrat leadership—all from New York City, to right the wrong committed? Does he think they'll accept a higher tax on their own constituency to spare taxpayers in the Hudson Valley and Long Island?

While I continue to seek a repeal of the payroll tax on our counties, I have at least proposed to do so with a *realistic* approach. I have sponsored a bill that would eliminate the payroll tax in Dutchess, Putnam, Orange and Rockland through the collection of higher fees from Connecticut which has 26% of the Metro-North ridership and has not contributed a single cent to the MTA bail-out.

If the Governor earnestly wanted to offer relief to the taxpayers unfairly burdened by the payroll tax, he would not have advanced a plan that was so clearly dead on arrival. The Governor and Senate Democrat leadership have already insulted the taxpayers of the Hudson Valley by ignoring their pleas to be heard when the payroll tax was being considered – now the Governor is insulting their intelligence with his latest proposal he and everyone else knows will never gain any traction.