



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senator Skelos Unveils New on-Line “Cut It Out!” Initiative -- Empowering Taxpayers in Effort to Help Cut Wasteful Spending

DEAN G. SKELOS June 7, 2010



### **New Interactive Resource Allows Public to Vote on Cutting Wasteful Spending Items**

Senate Republican Leader Dean G. Skelos today announced the launch of “Cut It Out!: *Citizens Cutting Government Waste*” – an interactive new on-line tool that will enable concerned taxpayers to cast votes for specific wasteful spending items that they would like to see eliminated from the State Budget.

On a regular basis, taxpayers in the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District will be given an opportunity to vote on-line and give their opinions on which specific examples of wasteful spending should be eliminated. This direct input from constituents will provide Senator Skelos with useful information that he will use to aggressively combat wasteful spending items in this year's State Budget negotiations and debate. Going forward, additional spending items will be added to the list for public consideration and new rounds of on-line voting by taxpayers.

“This new on-line initiative will let hardworking taxpayers speak out and take direct action regarding wasteful spending by their State government. By working together, we can highlight wasteful and unnecessary spending practices, and help save New York taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars or more each year,” Senator Skelos said.

The five spending items which are eligible to be voted on in the initial round of on-line balloting can be found below. New Yorkers can vote online for their “favorite” by clicking [HERE](#).

#### **Eliminate Funding for Purchase of "Conjugal Visit Trailers" at Correctional Facility:**

In his proposed budget for 2010-2011, Governor Paterson included a \$778,000 budget item to fund the purchase of two, double-wide trailer units. The trailers would be used at a State Correctional facility for "Conjugal Visits" between inmates and visitors. At a time when funds for schools, hospitals and State Parks are being cut, this type of expenditure for the benefit of convicted criminals should proactively be blocked from inclusion in the State Budget.

**Potential Savings: \$778,000**

**Requiring Health Care Co-Pays from Prison Inmates:** As millions of families struggle to balance the family budget while coping with high health care costs, State prison inmates -- even those with financial means -- are not required to pay anything whatsoever for their taxpayer funded health care. Many other states, such as California, New Jersey, Florida, and Pennsylvania, do require a co-pay from inmates, but New York State law currently prohibits them. By changing this law, and charging inmates a modest co-pay, State taxpayers could save \$5 million annually, while still ensuring that inmates receive proper care.

**Potential Savings: \$5 million**

**Cutting Number of “Deputy Commissioners” By 50%:** New York has one of the most expensive state governments in the nation, with State agencies being led by a veritable army of well paid Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and Associate Commissioners. In fact, it is currently estimated that we now have at least 175 Deputy-level Commissioners on the payroll at major State agencies – an excessive number that costs taxpayers approximately \$22 million each year. Historically, many of these positions, which pay lucrative six figure salaries, have been filled based on political considerations and connections, rather than qualifications or experience. Reducing the number of these “Assistant Commissioners” by 50% would save millions, and help hold State Agency Commissioners more accountable for the agencies they are supposed to be running.

**Potential Savings: \$11 million**

**Cut Taxpayer Funded Taxi Rides for Non-Emergency Medical Visits:**

The State Comptroller's Office recently unveiled an audit which showed that a Medicaid recipient from Poughkeepsie had received \$300 round-trip taxi rides to visit a family member at a long-term care facility in Albany five days a week. After the Comptroller’s audit, the taxi trips were classified as not medically necessary, but taxpayers had already shelled out nearly \$196,000. By tightening restrictions on such programs, especially in non-emergency cases and cases where public transportation is already available, State and County taxpayers could save substantial sums. **Potential Savings: \$8.3 million**

**Cut Taxpayer Expenditures Caused by Welfare and Medicaid Fraud:** New York has what many regard as the most expensive and generous Welfare and Medicaid programs in the nation. Until they were abolished over the past several years, anti-fraud safeguards such as finger-imaging to ensure identity and eligibility, face-to-face interviews, and asset test requirements, helped save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars each year. By re-implementing safeguards designed to crack down on instances of Welfare and Medicaid fraud, significant savings could be achieved, and the integrity of the programs could be strengthened.

**Potential Savings: \$34 million annually**

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