



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara welcomes governor's focus on Medicaid, touts local reform actions (Updated, January 10)

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 7, 2011

| ISSUE: **MEDICAID**



Albany, N.Y., January 6— In a letter today to Governor Andrew Cuomo, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) welcomed the governor's emphasis on Medicaid reform, offered the area's cooperation in bringing about a long-overdue restructuring of the system, and pointed to local efforts that have already been successful and could potentially serve as models for statewide changes.

"I'm grateful for this early opportunity to express my strong support for your administration's immediate and high-level focus on the long-standing need to overhaul New York's system of Medicaid," O'Mara wrote in today's letter. "It's an effort that many of us here in the Southern Tier have long advocated, pushed for and, most importantly, taken action on."

[see attached copy of letter and press release below]

In his State of the State message in Albany yesterday, Cuomo announced the appointment of New York's first-ever Medicaid Director, Jason Helgeson, a health finance professional from Wisconsin who successfully led that state's reform effort. He'll head up what's being called a Medicaid Redesign Team that's supposed to begin work by tomorrow and issue recommendations by March 1st for consideration as part of the 2011-2012

state budget.

O'Mara also took the opportunity in today's letter to highlight successful Medicaid reform efforts locally, particularly under the leadership of Chemung County Executive Tom Santulli, and urged the new governor to take them into account as models of effective, results-driven change.

"I would like to reemphasize efforts that have been underway in Chemung County over the past decade under the committed and dedicated leadership of Chemung County Executive Tom Santulli. As you know, County Executive Santulli is widely recognized and respected as a bold, innovative, and results-driven leader in this arena of reform and certainly I've been proud over this time to partner with him to explore, examine, encourage, and implement local efforts to get this system under control, reshape it, make it more cost-effective, taxpayer-friendly, and, overall, more efficient for patients and providers alike."

Prior to his election to the state Senate last fall, O'Mara represented Chemung and Schuyler counties in the Assembly beginning in 2005. His tenure in the Assembly included a stint as chairman of the Assembly Republican Task Force on Medicaid Waste, Fraud, and Abuse.

"With all of this in mind, in closing, I would like to fully welcome the state's first-ever Medicaid Director, Jason Helgerson, to New York. By all accounts, it appears that Mr. Helgerson was effective in Wisconsin and I certainly join you in hoping for and working toward similar success in our state. In this spirit of cooperation, I'm glad to extend any and every offer of assistance from County Executive Santulli, other local leaders across the Southern Tier, and, as always, from myself, to assist this vital work."

[Find more information on Governor Cuomo's first State of the State address.](#)

[Updated--January 10: Governor Cuomo has invited the public's participation in the Medicaid reform effort. See his new website, "[Redesigning the Medicaid Program](#)"]