



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Extreme Makeover New York

JAMES L. SEWARD January 7, 2011

| ISSUE: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, BUDGET, TAXES**



ONEONTA, 01/07/11 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I–Oneonta) today outlined his legislative agenda for the 2011 session of the New York State Senate. Seward’s plan, dubbed “Extreme Makeover: New York” focuses on smart budget cuts, property tax relief, economic development and government reform.

“New York is ready for a complete overhaul. My ‘Extreme Makeover: New York’ initiative includes calculated cost cutting that will provide our state with financial stability, tax relief that will

help people with their own bottom line, business stimulating actions aimed at jumpstarting job growth and government reforms to restore public confidence in Albany.

“Over the past two years political leaders have treated families and individuals to higher taxes and burdened our business community with absurd new fees. At the same time, state spending has grown by leaps and bounds with total disregard for the realities of our economic situation. Backroom deals and closed door politics have prevailed in Albany, shutting rank and file lawmakers out of the process and disenfranchising much of our state.

“In many ways, New York is crumbling. While the foundation may be strong, it is going to take more than a new coat of paint to breathe life into our neglected home. It is going to take an extreme makeover.”

Step 1 – Smart size. Since January 1, 2009, the New York state budget has increased by nearly \$14 billion. The spending plan was built on a shaky foundation and has tumbled like a house of cards leaving the state facing a deficit approaching \$10 billion.

“Unprecedented state spending is a leading cause of our current economic difficulties. For the past two years, out of touch Albany political bosses have gone on an unchecked spending spree – it has to end. Sensible belt-tightening is needed in order to generate a new fiscal atmosphere and lay the foundation on our road to recovery.”

Senator Seward is proposing several smart spending reduction initiatives including:

A firm cap on state spending;

Full on assault on Medicaid fraud and other abuses of state programs;

Consolidation of redundant or underutilized state agencies.

Step 2 – Taxpayer appreciation. Homeowners in New York State pay the nation’s highest property taxes. Last year, over Seward’s objection, the legislature enacted the largest income tax hike in state history, hiked health insurance taxes and raised fees on everything

imaginable.

“It is time New York lawmakers let residents know they are appreciated. Adopting a real cap on school property taxes and restoring the STAR tax rebate checks would be a start toward providing true relief for overwhelmed homeowners. Further, rolling back some of the extreme new taxes and fees adopted over the past two years would be an appropriate thank you for all New Yorkers.

“Significant mandate relief measures are also needed so local officials have the tools needed to trim their budgets. Eliminating unnecessary state reporting requirements, cutting skyrocketing pension costs, and providing consolidation incentives are steps that can be taken to assist local governments and school districts cut expenses, and in turn, reduce property taxes.

“Small business owners, families and senior citizens are struggling to make ends meet thanks in large part to government’s never ending pursuit of new and higher taxes. Simply living in New York State should not come with such an overwhelming burden. Across the board tax cuts and property tax relief must be immediate priorities.”

Step 3 – Economic revitalization. Commerce crushing policies enacted over the last two years need to be rescinded to show government’s willingness to partner with the business community and change the negative economic culture.

“Job creating tax cut proposals and red-tape removal plans have been shelved in favor of tax raids and fee hikes that have driven many hard working small business owners out of state and forced others to hang a going out of business sign. A multi-pronged plan to help alleviate the tax burden placed on our business owners and re-establish the partnership between Albany and Main Street is needed to give our economy a real shot in the arm.”

Seward’s business enhancement provisions include:

A tax credit for every new job created, additional credit for hiring a New Yorker on unemployment;

The elimination of certain taxes for small businesses and manufacturers;

Creation of a special commission to eliminate burdensome government red tape;

A moratorium on new taxes, fees and regulations;

Support for agriculture, New York's number one industry.

Step 4 – Transform capital culture. Closed door budget negotiations, exclusionary practices and questionable ethics have been the rule in Albany in recent years.

“For the past two years the 2007 budget reform law has been completely overlooked. Bi-partisan public conference committees were forgotten and replaced with secret negotiations that resulted in gimmick-laden, unbalanced spending plans. The shameful budget process is one reason why citizens have lost faith in their government.

“We need to reopen the budget process and ensure Albany is held accountable for each and every tax dollar spent. We must also expand ethics laws to increase disclosure and transparency. It is time we restore the public trust in state government.”

Senator Seward recently endorsed the Business Council of New York State's “Enough Already NY” campaign's Five to Survive economic reform agenda which includes: a property tax cap; a state spending cap; reducing the tax burden; reforming public employee pensions and limiting government borrowing. Senator Seward was also named a Hero Of Reform by New York Uprising, a non-partisan, independent coalition formed by former NYC Mayor Edward I. Koch that advocates for meaningful government reform across New York State.