



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Improving State Government and Getting Results

STEPHEN M. SALAND July 10, 2012

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The atmosphere in Albany has been remarkably different over the last two years. Frustration has been replaced with renewed energy. Bickering and partisanship are frowned upon. Cooperation is the new buzzword. And most importantly, the state's future is looking brighter.

As one who has long sought, with much success, to work across the aisle with my colleagues regardless of political affiliation, I must say this new spirit that has enveloped our state's capital is refreshing and proving to be quite productive.

In the last two years, we have enacted consecutive on-time state budgets which reduce overall spending, addressed multi-billion deficits without raising taxes or fees and focused on new private sector job growth. We reduced taxes on small businesses, established the NY Works Program to revitalize our infrastructure and enacted a 2 percent property tax cap.

The Middle Class Tax Cut and Job Creation Plan brought the middle class tax rates down to the lowest level in 58 years. We eliminated the onerous MTA payroll tax for 80 percent of impacted businesses and we approved new pension and Medicaid reforms that will produce significant savings for local governments and taxpayers.

In addition to the progress made on the fiscal front, we have enacted landmark legislation that will improve the quality of life for many New York residents. It was personally a gratifying session for me, as many initiatives that I sponsored were adopted this past legislative session.

New York now has the most expansive DNA database in the nation. We strengthened our laws to help combat domestic violence and texting while driving. We provided schools with the tools they need to crack down on cyber bullying which affects so many students today. We established the I-STOP program which utilizes a real time database to combat prescription drug abuse.

I would be remiss if I did not comment that our overall success is in part attributed to the new leadership in the Senate and the Governor's office. As many recall, state government in 2009 and 2010 was under one party control and as a result we witnessed a New York City centric operation. Our community, like all regions outside of New York City, were being shortchanged and taxpayers throughout the state suffered from poor fiscal and policy decisions.

With the change of leadership in 2011, however, we witnessed a profound turning of events. Governor Cuomo, the Senate and the Assembly all seem to have one common goal and that is to rebuild New York. More remains to be done but from the looks of things, real progress is being made and we're on the path toward economic recovery.