



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senator Seward Says 2013 Time To "Tap Our Full Potential"

JAMES L. SEWARD January 22, 2013



ONEONTA, 01/17/13 – In media conferences across his district kicking off the 2013 session of the New York State Senate, State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today focused on the next steps to “tapping our full potential.” Seward detailed his priorities which include passing comprehensive mandate relief measures to assist local governments and schools, further adjustments to the state education aid formula, and additional steps to bolster the state’s economic development growth.

“New York has taken significant strides over the past two years, but we have in no way reached the pinnacle of what can be achieved,” said Senator Seward. **“The entire state, and the 51st senate district in particular, is on the verge of making real advances – now it is up to Albany to provide the necessary tools to help tap our full potential.”**

Mandate Relief

The property tax cap signed into law in 2011 is making a difference, but another step is needed to lower taxes for homeowners - mandate relief. New mandate relief measures approved in 2012, including sweeping pension and Medicaid reform, will save local governments and taxpayers more than \$2.4 billion over the next five years alone. This year further measures must be enacted.

“We need to help local governments and school districts manage their expenditures efficiently while maintaining vital services. That’s why I supported \$1 billion in mandate relief advanced by the state senate when the property tax cap was first adopted. The assembly and governor would only agree to \$127 million worth of financial relief. Comprehensive mandate relief must be a priority moving forward.

“Every school superintendent and local elected official can quickly cite an example of a state required report or audit that costs countless man hours and dollars. New York needs to eliminate such duplicative and unnecessary reporting requirements.

“Further, steps must be taken to help streamline and encourage the sharing of services and other administrative expenses that can lower costs and allow local officials to turn their attention to local needs.

“Medicaid reform remains at the top of the list. The topic is finally starting to resonate in Albany and while initial steps have been taken to reduce this massive mandate, more must be done to bring true savings to taxpayers.”

Aid to Education

The vast majority of school districts in New York are strapped for cash. Those classified as “low-wealth, high need” are faced with even deeper issues with serious financial crises looming in the near future.

“For a number of years I have worked hard to illustrate the plight of our local school districts. Many schools in my district are struggling because they do not have the tax base to draw from; the wealth level is much lower than some downstate, suburban districts. Simply put, the manner in which state dollars are distributed must change.

“Schools in wealthy, suburban districts are contemplating cutbacks like ending a fourth language or eliminating extracurricular activities like ballet. In my district, the cuts are to core programs and hurt a student’s chance of graduating on time, or being able to attend his or her college of choice.

“The inequities of New York’s education aid formula have been exposed and partially repaired. A large portion of new aid provided in the 2012-2013 state budget was funneled to the schools that need it most. Further addressing the demographic differences that exist in our state must be part of a fully revised education aid formula.”

Job Growth

By partnering with Governor Cuomo several new job creation programs are paying dividends. The NY-Works Initiative is producing much needed infrastructure improvements and setting the table for future growth. Recharge NY, a revamped low cost power program, is helping keep the cost of doing business down so companies can afford to hire new workers. We are also reinvesting in our SUNY schools, fueling an economic engine for our region while educating our young people.

“Business tax cuts and new credits have been approved by the senate and must receive full adoption to foster private sector job growth. In particular, legislation I sponsored that would eliminate all business taxes on manufacturers passed the senate but not the assembly. Over a three year period, the legislation would reinvigorate the manufacturing sector with \$495 million in tax relief.

“I have also been pleased to usher in measures that support growing agriculture-based businesses like yogurt production and craft brewing. These industries have a strong base here locally and I look forward to cultivating further development through targeted tax credits and regulatory streamlining.

“Further emphasis must also be placed on expanding broadband/cell phone accessibility. If we are to support our rural areas, and facilitate job growth and economic opportunity, we have to ensure the availability of this important technology. Cell phone service is also important for our rural areas from a quality of life perspective and as tool for our first-responders.

“Every new job created helps our state’s economy, helps strengthen a community or a neighborhood, and most importantly, helps a family improve its quality of life here at home.”

Summary

“On-time budgets that hold the line on taxes and spending, an emphasis on job creation, and a streamlined state government that better serves the people of our state – these are just a few of the concepts that are now seen as the norm in Albany. It’s a solid baseline and one that we can build from.

“Further reducing costly mandates imposed on our local governments and school districts, ensuring our schools have the tools they need to provide students with a quality education, and enhancing our employers’ ability to create jobs are among the steps needed to take New York to the next level.

“There is a new synergy in Albany and the many accomplishments over the last two years are clear-cut evidence that the state is moving in the right direction. Now is the time to further capitalize on the momentum and tap our full potential.”