



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terry Gipson

Op-Ed: Speaking Up for the Hudson Valley

TERRY GIPSON March 24, 2014



Speaking up for the Hudson Valley

by Senator Terry Gipson

One of the final sparks that ignited my decision to run for the New York State Senate was when, as a small business owner, I received a letter stating that I would now have to pay the MTA Payroll Tax. I thought to myself, who is speaking up for the Hudson Valley?

I was elected as an Albany outsider, and in my first term have fought for the Dutchess and Putnam communities that I proudly represent. However, the current state budget process is a glaring example of how the needs of upstate communities, represented by both Republicans and Democrats, continue to be neglected by the New York City and Long Island powers who control the State Senate. That is why I have not supported their recent budget proposals.

One of the most important reasons why I can't support the proposals presented by the downstate-led Senate Majority Coalition, which is composed of both breakaway Democrats and Republicans, is that it gave greater funding to downstate charter schools, without restoring desperately needed funding for upstate schools. Education for our children who work hard and play by the rules should be a top priority, not a political wedge that divides our state. Further, school taxes make up the majority of our property taxes, and the residents of Dutchess and Putnam County cannot afford additional taxes. New York cannot be serious about truly reducing taxes until it equitably funds education without punishing property owners. Additionally, the current proposal does not do enough to address the failed implementation of the Common Core Curriculum.

The Majority Coalition's proposals also included a \$200 million increase in local aid to New York City while providing no additional local aid for upstate cities, towns and villages. Our hardworking families and businesses in New York State deserve a fair share of local aid to help mitigate the out-of-control property taxes that continue to hurt our upstate economy and quality of life. Adding insult to the Majority Coalition's proposal is that despite one of the harshest winters in recent history, on top of an already crumbling infrastructure, additional funding for our highway departments to improve our upstate roads, sidewalks and bridges is nowhere to be found. We cannot move our economy forward on a dilapidated 19th Century infrastructure.

The laundry list continues. The Majority Coalition proposes the elimination of \$92.5 million in funding for maintaining and improving our State Parks, matched with cuts to important funding to protect our environment. Our natural resources and parks lie at the heart of upstate's tourism industry, which is a major economic engine and job creator for our region.

I will stand with anyone, of any party, who is committed to fighting for upstate taxpayers. Right now, upstate communities deserve leaders at all levels of government who will work together and fight for them, not play along with the status quo and pander to only one part of our great state.