



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS August 13, 2014

The Small Picture

The checks are in the mail – literally. In about a month, families with children in New York State will be receiving a \$350 tax rebate check in their mailboxes. Yes, it's true - no kidding. (I'll give you a moment to pick up whatever it is you just dropped.)

You may remember from this column last year that I was knee deep in the fight to get New York families this \$350 rebate, an effort known as the Family Credit Act. It provides \$350 checks to residents with children under 17 as of 2012 whose incomes range between \$40,000 and \$300,000. That's an estimated one million families and it's all part of a plan we negotiated that also increased the minimum wage to \$9 an hour by the end of 2015.

Now I know \$350 won't send anyone to the penthouse when taken individually, but when you provide that rebate to a million families across New York State, I can assure you that the tax-and-spend insiders grow as angry as a nest of hornets. The rule of thumb among this entrenched old guard in Albany is to never, ever give anything back.

But I held out hope and my like-minded colleagues and I kept fighting. My theory is a simple one, really. If forced to spend \$350 unexpectedly on family or school related expenses, it certainly would hurt many of us. So wouldn't a \$350 rebate be just as welcome as a \$350

expenditure would be scorned? Those few extra dollars can pay for school supplies, clothes, or just some of the unexpected incidentals families are hit with each fall, the stuff it seems we can never plan for. Those few extra dollars could also be the difference between a successful start to the school year versus a stressful one. Besides, it's taxpayer money and if it's at all possible, I am still very much of the mindset that we know how to better spend our own money than government does.

More than the material reality, this win was symbolic. After so many years of people cynically believing New York State was beyond repair, not only have we curbed spending and cut taxes, we're actually sending money back. That's far more important because it gives people hope and restores faith in government. To be sure, not a single day goes by that I'm not reminded how you elected me to upset the apple cart. It was to change a long-embedded tax-and spend culture that existed without accountability. It was to fight back against the more than \$14 billion in tax and fee increases. It was to repeal a job-killing MTA payroll tax and an unreasonable energy surcharge. It was to restore unreasonable cuts in school aid to Long Island. It was to fix a \$10 billion structural state budget deficit that no one would take responsibility for or explain!

This simple \$350 tax rebate is just one more tangible indicator that things are getting better in New York State. You already know we curbed spending and capped property taxes. People have seen school aid restored and state income taxes cut for millions of New Yorkers. They know about the renewed investments in infrastructure, read all about our state's restored stellar credit ratings, and have watched the reports about New York's heralded budget surplus. By any and every measure we're restoring New York's fiscal integrity – but a check in mail makes it real. And this is just a first step in making sure New Yorkers are made whole again. Putting money back in the people's pocket is not a new or radical idea but a common-sense adjustment that is fair and overdue. These types of efforts simply wouldn't be possible had we not been able to balance the state budget and control spending these last

four years. But that accomplished, it's time to rebuild the spending and savings power of everyday New Yorkers. You send representatives to Albany to take care of the big picture but it's so we can all better take care of our smaller pictures that matter most.