



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James S. Alesi

## The Empire State: Test Your New York State Iq

JAMES S. ALESI

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As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business, I realize that we need to do everything possible to revitalize the Upstate economy, give businesses the opportunity to succeed, and create new economic opportunities for young New Yorkers. That is why I recently unveiled the Upstate Now agenda, an unprecedented 10-point job creation and economic growth plan that will transform and revitalize the Upstate economy, create thousands of new jobs, and generate billions of dollars in new investments in communities all across our State.

The Upstate Now strategic plan includes an extensive array of carefully crafted, fully integrated proposals that fall under the following 10 key categories:

### **1. Reducing Taxes for Small Businesses, Manufacturers and Key Industries**

Taxes play a key role in helping companies decide where to locate, invest and create new jobs. From eliminating income and corporate franchise taxes on Upstate's manufacturers, to further reducing corporate tax rates, to enacting much needed property tax relief for small businesses, the Senate's plan will help fuel economic growth in Upstate for years to come. The Senate will also pursue efforts to simplify New York's notoriously complex tax code and

to reform the Wicks Law.

## **2. Building and Investing in a 21st Century Infrastructure for the Upstate Economy**

Upstate Now calls for hundreds of millions of dollars in targeted investments in Upstate's infrastructure. Projects include establishing high-speed trains in key Upstate corridors, expanding our roads, water lines and technology infrastructure to support job growth. The plan will also create commerce and economic growth zones around regional airports to promote location of new businesses.

## **3. Making Upstate an International Powerhouse in New and Emerging Technologies**

The Senate is advancing new incentives to encourage emerging technology companies that already do research and development in New York, to take that next step and actually manufacture their products in the Empire State. The plan will also seek to more fully integrate the groundbreaking research taking place at New York's outstanding colleges and universities, with the local and regional private-sector economies across Upstate. The plan makes extensive investments to support expansion and assist in the retention of agribusiness and agriculturally related jobs in the State. Building upon the success of the J2K Program, \$100 million in critical capital funding will be distributed through Regional Partnerships enacted in 2006.

## **4. Reducing Energy Costs for Employers and Promote Energy Independence**

New York's small business leaders have consistently cited high energy costs as a major obstacle to future growth, profitability and new job creation. To address this problem, Upstate Now advances a tax credit program that would help eligible small businesses afford the rising cost of energy. In addition the Upstate plan will ensure that New York will have renewable energy for the future. Encouraging renewable energy products to sustain future economic growth without being held hostage to a petroleum based economy.

## **5 . Reducing Health Care Costs for Small Businesses to Insure More Families**

The skyrocketing cost of health insurance forces many businesses to face the difficult decision of shifting more of the cost of coverage to employees or dropping coverage entirely. The Senate's plan would significantly reduce the number of uninsured New Yorkers through a combination of tax advantages, government initiatives and commercial insurance market reforms that would bring health insurance within the means of all small businesses and every New Yorker.

## **6. Creating Thriving Main Streets**

While the downstate metropolitan region continues to boom, far too many of our Upstate communities continue to face real challenges. The Upstate Now strategic plan addresses this trend by making new investments in programs to revitalize our communities, eliminate blight, rehabilitate old buildings and clean up environmental hazards that inhibit new development.

## **7. Winning the Global Competition for Manufacturing Plants**

Over the past several years major manufacturing facilities have located in the U.S. New York must succeed in attracting huge new manufacturing investments. The Senate Majority will aggressively pursue initiatives – from strategic investments, and tax incentive packages, to ensure the Empire State is fully prepared to compete and win major manufacturing investments.

## **8. Preparing the Finest Workforce in the Nation**

The Upstate Now agenda will seek to realign the State's workforce development programs to ensure that they are more effective in meeting dual needs of workers and employers. And while reforming and improving our workforce training programs, the Upstate Now initiative will also provide new incentives to encourage young New Yorkers to live, learn and work in

our State.

### **9. Establish the Upstate Now One-Stop Business Start-Up and Support Program**

Our nation's economic strength was built by industrious Americans who had the courage, foresight and determination to launch their own business. Upstate Now includes a wide array of new initiatives to help make doing business in New York easier, and to promote entrepreneurship, encourage investment and provide support for starting and growing a business. Upstate Now will provide an online One Stop location for information, business development, and permitting as well as a new "Business Hotline" staffed 7 days per week.

### **10. Marketing Upstate's Outstanding Recreational, Cultural and Tourism Opportunities**

Upstate Now will enhance local coordination of marketing New York's regionally significant destinations and spotlight the State's historic sites and agricultural tourist attractions. Upstate Now will create a comprehensive statewide system of accessible and safe multiuse thematic trails for every age.

The Upstate Now agenda is not simply the best plan to revitalize the Upstate economy, it is the only plan for Upstate to be advanced in Albany this year. After hearing a great deal of rhetoric about Upstate during campaign season, business leaders from across the State have been surprised and concerned by the new Administration's lack of attention to this vital region. The Upstate Now Plan sends a clear message that Upstate is a top priority for me, and I will be fighting hard throughout the remainder of the session to ensure that this comprehensive job-creating plan is enacted.

Recent tests in Albany County show unsafe levels of lead, legislation would require annual testing

When I was a Monroe County Legislator in the early 1990's, I asked for a review of all drinking water fountains in schools and other public buildings. While the review did not take place at the time, when I became a State Senator, I began carrying legislation that would require all school districts to test their drinking water fountains annually for lead contamination and report those findings to the public.

Recently, the Albany City School District voluntarily decided to test the water in all of their school buildings. In at least six school buildings, 32 faucets came back with high, unsafe levels of lead in the water. While one would think this problem would only affect older buildings, some of the affected faucets were in buildings that had been renovated.

While I commend the Albany City School District for taking this proactive, voluntary approach to ensuring that the drinking water they are providing students, faculty and staff is safe and healthy, it is time that every school district across the state conduct the same tests on their faucets. While many consider lead paint a more dangerous contaminant for children, each day millions of school children drink from water fountains that contain copper lead pipes in school buildings. It is our responsibility to ensure that the water they drink is not affected by dangerous, high levels of lead.

I will continue to monitor this issue closely as I advocate for passage of this important legislation. We spend so much time educating our children about the importance of drinking water every day. Now we must make sure the water that they do drink is clean, healthy and safe.