



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

## What is that note attached to my utility bill?

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By Senator George Maziarz

You may have received an unwelcome note with your last utility bill. The note might have said something like: “Due to a state law that took effect on July 1, 2009, utilities must collect a special assessment from all customers for the state’s general fund. This assessment amounts to an annual bill increase of approximately 2%.”

I want you to know that I voted AGAINST the state law that raises our utility bills. This was part of the horrendous state budget adopted earlier this year. I voted NO, and I’ve been speaking out loudly against the state budget and its harmful consequences for Upstate families ever since. I began speaking out right on the Senate floor during the debates over the budget. You can watch video footage of some of my remarks by visiting my YouTube Channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/SenatorMaziarz>.

For some, it may be difficult to appreciate how the debates over power and policy in Albany affect the everyday lives of people living Western New York. Well, here is a concrete example of how the downstate forces that

controlled the Senate in the Spring turned their backs on Upstate families. The state budget they voted for taxes and spends more than ever before, at a time when most people are cutting back. We are in tough economic times, when every dollar counts, and now we can plainly see how the passage of the budget in Albany resulted in the utility rate hike and the awful note arriving in your mailbox.

The assessment (which is a fancy word for a tax) is expected to raise more than \$2,000,000,000 over the next five years. That's \$2 billion taken out of the pockets of taxpayers and businesses to support the ever-increasing array of state programs and services. Wouldn't it be better to forego this utility tax hike and live with a little less state spending, rather than continue to make it more costly to live and do business in Upstate New York?

I've been trying to point out to my colleagues from downstate that their priorities are backwards. Our primary goal must be to stop the exodus of people and jobs. Representatives from downstate—where, relatively speaking, the economy is humming—don't see this problem like we do here in Western New York. But we all know too many friends and family members who have left town in search of better opportunities. We need to reduce taxes, costs, and red tape, and create opportunities here.

So when you read that note and when you look at your utility bill, please remember that I voted NO. And I will continue to say NO to any proposal that further undermines our quality of life.