



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Results & Response to Budget Survey

LIZ KRUEGER May 19, 2010

| ISSUE: **BUDGET**



Over the past several months, through a budget survey offered online and mailed to my constituents, I have been collecting feedback on how New Yorkers think the budget should be dealt with. More than 1,900 people provided informative responses, sharing many different perspectives on the budget while also highlighting the difficulties we face in trying to bring together so many diverse opinions.

Like many others, I am very frustrated by the fact that the Legislature and Governor have yet to agree on a budget. But, I also understand why it has been so incredibly hard to close

this out – the decisions which we face are inevitably going to be extremely painful and are never easy to make, especially in a closely-divided Senate. However, as I remind my colleagues every day: delaying the inevitable does not make it any easier.

I've always told you where I stand – and this is no exception. Below is a list of some common responses I received in the survey, along with an explanation on where I stand on these points. For the results of the survey [click here](#).

- **General Feedback:** For the broad budgetary priorities, more people wanted to cut member items more than anything else, with employee benefits and STAR tax rebates not far behind.

**Where I Stand:** I have argued for cutting member items this year, but convincing my colleagues to give up funds they have control over is no easy task. Of course, member items don't add up to much savings in the total picture.

- **General Feedback:** Most people support maintaining funding for education, healthcare and transportation.

**Where I Stand:** Cutting funding for these invaluable services is a difficult reality we face and one reason there has been a delay getting a budget done. The fact of the matter is that education and healthcare make up a huge percentage of the budget, so unless there are other significant tax increases, it will be very difficult to balance the budget without some real cuts to these areas.

- **General Feedback:** In terms of broad tax policy, there was significant support for a carbon tax on polluters, while there was little support for business taxes. Contrary to the rhetoric of the tea partiers, constituents were fairly open to most tax increases – with the exception of business taxes.

**Where I Stand:** I support a carbon tax, but we may need more revenue. I also believe that it is critical to find a way to recognize the need for shared sacrifice in these tough times. The Legislature is proposing real cuts to the budget; we may be forced to lay off workers and are asking them to give up their negotiated raises. I do not believe it is unreasonable to raise revenue from those who are still doing well in this bad economy, particularly the financial institutions who were bailed out by the government. Those who have made huge profits in part because the government bailed them out of crises should help us with ours.

- **General Feedback:** There was incredible support for targeted revenue enhancements. The most popular ideas in the survey were allowing the sale of wine in grocery stores and the tax on sugared beverages.

**Where I Stand:** I have strongly supported both wine in grocery stores and a tax on sugared beverages in budget discussions with my colleagues. Unfortunately, strong opposition from the affected special interests – soda companies and liquor stores – and their lobbyists has been very effective and this appears to be a heavy lift for Albany.

- **General Feedback:** When it comes to the Governor's proposed cuts, respondents had a preference for across-the-board cuts, with the exception of cuts to school aid, homelessness programs and supportive housing. However, in general, there was a preference for revenue

raisers over cuts.

**Where I Stand:** It is clear to me that we need a mix of revenue raisers and cuts to address the State's fiscal situation. I believe that across-the-board cuts are not necessarily the best mechanism, because they don't allow for any evaluation of effectiveness of different programs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with further suggestions or to ask my position on other issues. We may not agree on every last item, but I'll hear you out and always tell you exactly where I stand.

-Liz