Give The People What They Want

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| ISSUE: **BUDGET**

With the state budget still unfinished, I have had no shortage of comments from constituents on the unacceptable situation. Letters to my office, e-mails through my website, and personal conversations at events around the district have all demonstrated a sense of public frustration. I echo the sentiment.

The 2010-2011 state budget is on its way to becoming one of the latest in state history. It was drawn up behind closed doors, and then adopted in piecemeal fashion and it still isn't

complete. Perhaps that is just as well, because when all is said and done, we will be saddled with a budget that spends over $136 billion, includes new and higher taxes, shuns property tax relief and decimates our upstate small businesses.

For these reasons I have consistently voted against the out of control spending proposals offered by out of touch Albany legislators and will continue to oppose measures that place a higher tax burden on cash strapped families and businesses.

Recently I launched an interactive on-line poll called "Cut It Out!: Citizens Cutting Government Waste." Over 1,600 people weighed in, casting their votes in favor of several cost cutting strategies. Respondents also shared their own budget cutting ideas, arming me with ammunition for future budget fights.

The public campaign helped shine the light on some shocking spending proposals including a $778,000 budget item to fund the purchase of two, double-wide trailer units to be used at a state correctional facility for "conjugal visits" between inmates and visitors. The spending item has since been dropped.

While public outrage helped embarrass state leaders into dropping one ridiculous expenditure, many others are still being forced onto New Yorkers. Cutting the state's exorbitant number of deputy commissioners, enacting real Medicaid reforms, and forcing state prisoners to foot a share of their taxpayer funded health care coverage were all ideas favored by the public but rejected by Democrats in charge in Albany.

A recent telephone survey conducted by Rasmussen Reports also showed overwhelming support for fiscal restraint. The survey of likely voters in New York found that 79 percent say the best way to reduce the state's budget deficit is to cut state spending.

New York residents made it clear that they cannot afford the rising cost of state government and the billions of dollars in new taxes and higher fees being employed to pay for out of control budgeting. I agree, and have consistently championed both a state spending cap and a property tax cap to help rein in unchecked spending. Unfortunately, supposed Albany reformers have failed to join me.

Over 1,200 people have also watched my on-line video titled "No New Taxes." In the video, a direct message to constituents of the 51st senatorial district, I pledged to vote against any budget plan that raises taxes, hikes fees, increases borrowing and does nothing to create new jobs.

Among the posted comments following the video was one that read in part: "Senator Seward, I was born and raised in this beautiful state. I served the city and state of New York and our country proudly and with honor protecting our citizens, enforcing laws and supporting our efforts overseas. 48 years later, I'm planning on moving elsewhere because of taxes." I am concerned that many others share this sentiment.

Hardworking families and struggling businesses, especially those in upstate New York, feel defeated. We need to rekindle their hope in the Empire State. Unfortunately, the nearly complete state spending plan will only throw more cold water on the dreams of many.

I have voted against every piece of the unbalanced state budget so far, and will continue to do so unless major changes are made. Property tax relief, genuine spending restraint, a ban on unfunded mandates for schools and local governments, and incentives for upstate businesses need to be incorporated into the final budget plan. That's what the people want – and that's what I'm fighting for.

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