



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Ortt, Senate Vote in Favor of One-House Budget Resolution

ANTOINETTE DELBEL March 14, 2016



### THE SENATE MAJORITY'S BUDGET PLAN

A BETTER BUDGET FOR  
**NEW YORK FAMILIES**

ALBANY – Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) today voted in favor of the State Senate’s one-house budget resolution, which kicks off negotiations with the Assembly and Governor for the 2016-17 state budget. The Senate’s proposal outlines benefits to working families, businesses and schools, including tax cuts, education funding, infrastructure and transportation parity, and funding to combat the heroin epidemic.

A video of Senator Ortt’s statement on the budget resolution can be found [here](#).

“By increasing school aid by \$1.6 billion and fully eliminating the anti-Upstate GEA, we will help students, parents, teachers, and taxpayers,” **said Senator Ortt**. “We insist on infrastructure parity between Upstate and New York City so that we can make record – and long overdue – investments in our roads, bridges, and water. We also continue the bipartisan fight to address the heroin epidemic by dedicating \$167 million in funding to educate the public, help addicts, and put dealers behind bars.”

### **Cutting Taxes**

The Middle Class Income Tax Relief Program would create a new 25 percent tax rate reduction that would be phased in from 2019 to 2025. This permanent rate cut will save nearly 4 million middle-class taxpayers an average of \$897, for a total of \$3.5 billion annually after it’s fully implemented in 2025.

### **Fully Eliminate the 18-a Utility Tax Surcharge**

The Senate’s budget proposal would significantly reduce energy costs for consumers and businesses alike. The one-house budget fully eliminates the 18-a assessment surcharge by the end of 2016 – one year ahead of the current phase-out plan scheduled to be completed by 2017. The 18-a surcharge, imposed by Democrats in 2009, is a surcharge residents and businesses are forced to pay on utility bills charged by the State’s publicly owned utilities. The move to eliminate the 18-a surcharge this year would save taxpayers \$125 million in fiscal year 2017.

### **Fully Eliminate the GEA for all School Districts**

The Senate budget would fully restore the state education funding cuts known as the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) this fiscal year as opposed to the Governor’s Executive Budget proposal to phase out the GEA over a two year period. The Senate Republican Majority is proposing to eliminate the remaining \$434 million in GEA cuts that would

increase aid to \$1.6 billion for school districts across the state. Last year, the State Legislature eliminated nearly all of the anti-Upstate, GEA, which saved taxpayers in the 62nd district \$18 million.

### **Higher Education Tax Savings**

The one-house budget would make college more affordable for thousands of students and families. The Senate Republican conference proposed \$87 million to expand the income eligibility and award amounts for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). It also includes an increase in the tuition tax credit and creation of a new state income tax exemption for a total tax savings of \$295 million.

### **Rejects College Tuition for Illegal Immigrants**

The Senate's one-house does not include the Governor's proposal of \$27 million to help send illegal immigrants to college. That money would be funded by taxpayers, so that undocumented immigrants would be able to apply for state financial aid for college. The Senate rejected this proposal due to the fact that tons of working class families are struggling to send their kids to college and are being forced to take out large amounts in college loans.

**Senator Ortt said**, "Our conference is firmly committed to the needs of Upstate businesses, working families, and schools. It's also important to note what's not in the Senate budget - we firmly rejected liberal New York City efforts to provide taxpayer-funded college for illegal immigrants."

### **Parity in Infrastructure and Transportation Funding**

The Senate's one-house proposes parity in infrastructure funding for highways, roads and bridges between upstate and downstate. Traditionally, infrastructure funding between

downstate and upstate was essentially equal. Recently, however, the funding formula shifted - with downstate infrastructure receiving more resources than upstate. Ortt and Senate Republicans took a firm stance that the state needed to invest in infrastructure and that spending needed parity. The Senate adds an additional \$6.5 million for a total of more than \$200 million in upstate infrastructure aid.

### **Opioid Abuse Prevention, Treatment, Recovery and Education**

The Senate Republican Majority's budget proposal includes a total of \$167 million in funding to strengthen opioid prevention, treatment, recovery and education services. The Governor's Executive Budget proposed \$141 million to combat the epidemic. The Senate accepts his proposal and increases it by another \$26 million.

**Senate Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction Co-Chair Senator Ortt said,** "The heroin epidemic is sweeping across our state at an alarming rate without discrimination of its victims. This budget proposal represents our conference's firm commitment to addressing and ultimately eradicating the epidemic in New York State. From educating the public, to helping addicts, to putting more dealers behind bars, we've put forth proposals to attack each area of this public health crisis. I'm hopeful the Assembly and Governor will follow our lead to deliver resources to communities and families in dire need of relief."

The state's \$145 billion budget is due March 31.