



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS September 30, 2016

I'm going to share a secret I've learned during my time in public service— one you probably already suspect: no one political party and certainly no one person has all the right answers. They just don't. In fact, for too many people, solutions are not really a priority anymore; demonizing someone else for a problem takes precedence over actually solving it.

Much of the media has been co-opted into this routine. They feed us a steady diet of discord, trying to divide us. Somehow, it's always the other guy's fault, and they're the enemy because their opinion is different. For those ideologues, I offer Ben Franklin's sage advice, "We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

Case in point would be New York. Some of you may recall my observations in this column as I embarked on my new job as your state senator six years ago. I was fortunately surrounded by other like-minded, freshmen legislators and a new governor who were fed up with the inertia of hyper-partisan state politics. Along the way I wrote about our battles and our progress, our ups and downs, warts and all. Besides being a dad to teenagers, I don't think that I've ever done anything quite as demanding.

But here's the upshot: we worked together and got things done; lots of things. We passed six, consecutive on-time budgets, a first for New York, while closing a \$10 billion budget gap — all without raising a single tax or fee. We cut income taxes to the lowest they've been in 70

years and then passed a long-overdue tax cap. We made record investments in state aid for local schools and the environmental protection fund making us “greener” than ever. We established one of the fairest paid family-leave policies in the country without penalizing business and passed legislation guaranteeing equal pay for women. In short, we made tremendous progress and made life a bit more livable for everyday people.

We can't let the common person be forgotten because at the end of the day, that's what this is all about. Everyday working people care less about standing on ideology and more about feeding their families, paying the bills and getting on with their lives. And what do the vast majority of Americans of every lifestyle and background want? Being able to come home from a good paying job, proud to face your family and secure in the fact that you can provide for them.

Don't let spin doctors distract us with all their noise because they've either forgotten what we need or don't care. Yes, we all have differences of opinion but overall there is far more that unites us than divides us. Most people are good people who want to support their families, work with dignity and live in peace and security. Getting them there has to remain our number one priority, case closed. Everything else is secondary. Call me an optimist but I still think we can make it happen. Actually, I correct myself: I know we have to make it happen.