



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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When I first ran to become your State Senator six years ago, I walked door to door to literally thousands of homes in our district to introduce myself. I rang so many doorbells, shook so many hands, and frankly, had so many cups of coffee with all of you that I think I didn't sleep for weeks. There was a lot of hustle and bustle those summer months but what I most clearly remember from that time was a blazingly hot July afternoon when I was graciously invited into the home of an older woman. It was small but spotless and one could see that she took great pride in the lace curtains and the doilies on the tables. We spoke for a few minutes and when I asked for her vote she looked me straight in the eye and asked a simple but poignant question,

*“Do you believe in the dignity of work?”*

I was thrilled she asked because it summed up what was wrong with New York and precisely why I was running for senate. Life was simply too difficult for the everyday working men and women of this state. So my answer to her was a heartfelt “Yes!” as I explained that I came from a blue-collar, construction family. My father came to this country from Portugal with little more than the little he carried. With many lean years of struggle he eventually went on to start his own company which employs dozens of people on a daily basis. And he made sure that along with my brothers and sisters that I was right

there by his side day in and day out. We went together to job sites, struggled to meet payroll, bid on contracts and sorted through New York's massive red tape to be sure that the people who depended on us for their livelihood weren't let down. My dad drilled it into us: never let your people down.

Those friends and colleagues who work for our company have families to support and we take that responsibility seriously. There is dignity in work – in the ability to earn a wage, support oneself and one's family, and put a little aside for a rainy day.

That lesson stays with me and it's why I love serving as chair of the New York Senate Labor Committee. But one of the more frustrating challenges we face is connecting people to the more than 100,000 mid-skill level job openings in New York right now. These are good jobs that require more than a high school diploma but not necessarily a four-year college degree and that offer good wages in the trades and manufacturing. So my colleagues and I formed a task force and met with leaders in business, higher education, local governments, and workforce training. Together we identified ways to improve employee readiness and to connect job seekers with potential employers. I took those recommendations and passed several bills to directly help put people to work. They include:

- Providing high schools and community colleges with forward facing data that will enable them to proactively steer students towards successful, in-demand career paths, rather than reactively shepherding them to jobs that may become obsolete in the coming years;
- Creating partnerships between high school counselors and local building trades to help fill apprenticeships (this includes allowing students to earn a paycheck while undergoing classroom instruction under supervision of a professional tradesman);
- Investing \$35 million to expand the Pathways in Technology Schools (P-TECHs) and Early College High Schools to meet student demand and enhance educational performance; and

- Establishing the Help Individuals Reach Employment (HIRE) program to help SUNY and CUNY students who have graduated and cannot find full-time employment.

There are more initiatives in the works but too many to list here. The point is the jobs are out there; we just have to do a better job of connecting all the players. I remain convinced that if we can do that, and put people back to work, we'll solve far many more problems than just unemployment. In that light I invite you to visit [newyork.us.jobs](http://newyork.us.jobs) and uncover the thousands of opportunities that may be right for you. And whatever you do, remember that there is always dignity in all honest labor.