



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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A New Year Brings New Opportunities for NY State

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The end of one year and the start of another is a perfect time to reflect on the past and plan for the future. The arrival of 2017 brings with it a new legislative session in Albany and a host of challenges and opportunities. We must continue to move forward in those areas where we have made great progress, but we must also tackle the hard decisions necessary to make New York a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Efforts to control state spending and reduce taxes and fees on residents and businesses remain one of my top priorities. Over the past six years, the self-imposed spending cap has

saved taxpayers and businesses over \$31 billion and a landmark 2-percent property tax cap has saved an additional \$15 billion. I was proud to join my Legislature colleagues in voting for 78 different tax cuts, saving over \$11 billion. This year's budget also includes a 20-percent middle class income tax cut which, when fully implemented, will establish the lowest middle class tax rate since 1948. Meanwhile, the manufacturing tax rate will be the lowest since 1917 and the corporate rate the lowest since 1968. Going forward, we must continue to exercise fiscal discipline and responsibility.

While we have had some success at reforming the state's burdensome regulatory system, there is a long way to go to improve the state's business climate. Regulations which promote public safety and welfare are critical, but the rule should not be arbitrary, duplicative or overly burdensome.

On the education front, I am pleased that we were able to put an end to the disastrous Gap Elimination Adjustment. The GEA slashed funding to school districts across the state and removing it from the budget was a step in the right direction. Now, our focus must be on ensuring fair and equitable distribution of education aid to all schools.

The Legislature must also implement meaningful ethics reform. Violations of the public's trust will not be tolerated and those who do break the rules must be held accountable.

Under an agreement with the Governor and Assembly, the Senate passed a joint resolution to strip pensions from elected officials and policymakers who commit a felony. The proposed constitutional amendment must be approved again in 2017 before it goes to the public for a final vote. This reform would bolster existing laws designed to respond to corruption and wrongdoing.

Finally, the New Year must bring ridesharing services to Buffalo and upstate NY. Companies such as Uber and Lyft have proven beneficial in New York City and communities across the

country and it's time to allow them to operate statewide. Not having these services puts our region at a competitive disadvantage.

These are just a few of the many issues facing our state in the year ahead. As we prepare to meet these challenges, I am honored to serve as your representative in the NY State Senate.

I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.