



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara criticizes governor's last-minute veto of mandate relief legislation and calls on Cuomo to live up to his mandate relief promise

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 3, 2017

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Governor Cuomo's end-of-the-year, close-to-midnight veto once again shows that he refuses to get serious about or make the commitment to meaningful mandate relief for local governments and local property taxpayers. When the tax cap was first enacted five years ago, the governor promised that it would go hand in hand with rolling back the heavy burden of unfunded state mandates on local governments, school districts and taxpayers. While there have been some important mandate relief actions since then, including long-term pension reform and the takeover of the growth in local Medicaid costs, not nearly enough has been done to ensure a future of

long-term property tax reductions for local property taxpayers.

Elmira, N.Y., January 3—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today strongly criticized Governor Andrew Cuomo's last-minute veto of legislation O'Mara co-sponsored in 2016 to provide important mandate relief to local counties by requiring the state to take over the cost legal defense services for the poor, commonly known as "indigent criminal defense."

The legislation (**S8114/A10706, Veto #306 of 2016**) would have phased in a state takeover of the full cost of indigent defense by 2022. It was unanimously approved by both houses of the Legislature in June and, in his last action of 2016, rejected by Cuomo in a late-night veto issued on New Year's Eve.

O'Mara said, "Governor Cuomo's end-of-the-year, close-to-midnight veto once again shows that he refuses to get serious about or make the commitment to meaningful mandate relief for local governments and local property taxpayers. When the tax cap was first enacted five years ago, the governor promised that it would go hand in hand with rolling back the heavy burden of unfunded state mandates on local governments, school districts and taxpayers. While there have been some important mandate relief actions since then, including long-term pension reform and the takeover of the growth in local Medicaid costs, not nearly enough has been done to ensure a future of long-term property tax reductions for local property taxpayers. We need a future defined by property tax cuts, not smaller property tax increases. The governor's decision to reject this strong, unanimously approved, bipartisan legislation is another missed opportunity to begin truly turning things around for local property taxpayers."

O'Mara also urged Cuomo to begin paying more attention to the burden of unfunded state mandates on local governments and school districts. Since the state's enactment of the local property tax cap in 2011, O'Mara has been outspoken in his criticism that the state, as the governor originally promised to secure the Legislature's support for enacting the cap, has not

followed through on its commitment to meaningful relief for counties from unfunded state mandates.

“The approval of this legislation to get county governments and local property taxpayers out from under this unfunded state mandate would have marked a significant mandate relief action to start the new year. We need to take actions like this one if we’re ever going to truly transform the state-local partnership and lead the way to a future of property tax cuts for our local taxpayers. It’s disappointing, to say the least, that the governor keeps refusing to live up to his promise and recognize the need,” said O’Mara, who vowed to join his colleagues in renewing the fight for the legislation’s enactment in 2017.

The move to relieve counties locally and statewide of this unfunded state mandate was identified early last year by the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) as one of its top mandate relief priorities. It was strongly supported by the Steuben County Legislature in a resolution adopted by county legislators in August.