



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senator Seward Highlights 2017 Priorities

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| ISSUE: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MANDATE RELIEF, COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY, COMBATING HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION, ETHICS REFORM**



ONEONTA, 01/12/17 – In media conferences across his district kicking off the 2017 session of the New York State Senate, State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref-Oneonta) today detailed his legislative priorities. Senator Seward says his agenda closely reflects the concerns brought to him by constituents and will create new opportunities for individuals and overall growth for our region.

“As we start 2017, there are a number of challenges ahead. However, I also know that we have great potential here in the 51st senate district and across New York State,” said Senator Seward. “As I embark on my 16th term, I know that I do so with strong partnerships in tow - local officials, business owners, community leaders, and residents whom I work with daily. They are the people whom I have teamed with to accomplish so much, and with whom I will continue to partner to create new opportunities for individuals and growth for our entire region.”

Economic Development & Job Creation

Recent initiatives to reduce energy taxes, invest in major economic development and transportation projects, and expand job-training programs are all having a positive effect on New York State’s economy. Moving forward, additional broad-based tax relief programs and regulatory reforms are needed to ensure sweeping job growth.

“A U.S. Census report released last month showed New York’s population has declined for the first time in a decade. The only way to reverse this disturbing trend is to create new economic opportunities here at home.

“State government must do more to encourage job growth, plain and simple. Unfortunately, a promotional campaign or a few television ads will not alter a long-standing belief that New York is unfriendly to business. We need to cut costs and red tape to add jobs.”

Senator Seward’s economic development priorities include:

- Broad-based tax relief programs to lower the cost of doing business;
- Elimination of outdated and unnecessary state regulations;
- Extension of the STAR property tax relief program to small business owners;
- Greater workforce training – connecting educators with employers;
- Ridesharing for upstate New York.

A More Affordable New York

A record middle class income tax cut was signed into law in 2016 that will save New Yorkers millions of dollars. State government has also employed fiscally conservative principles to keep spending in check and ensure we are living within our means. Additional measures, and an end to unfunded state mandates, will also help stop the exodus from New York.

“Along with creating opportunities, we also need a more affordable New York. I have worked to keep property taxes in check and will continue to support measures that will allow hardworking New Yorkers to keep more of their money.

“Legislation to enact a permanent two-percent state spending cap has already passed in Albany. We have been following this guideline on a voluntary basis and making it law will ensure state spending will remain in check in the future. We also need mandate relief to help local governments.

“A full state takeover of Medicaid would be a game changer. Measures to phase in a state takeover of indigent legal defense services and district attorney salary increases are also needed to help free up local dollars for local needs.”

Senator Seward is also calling for continued state support of the STAR and Enhanced STAR property tax relief programs along with increased eligibility.

Education - Supporting our Future

Education aid is consistently one of the largest portions of the state budget. The 2016-17 state budget included a record aid increase of \$1.5 billion and the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) was completely erased. Additional steps are needed to further help schools in low wealth areas of the state. Assistance to help families and students afford a college education will also be a leading priority.

“Ensuring our schools have the resources they need to help students succeed and meet new challenges has always been one of my leading priorities. Not only does the funding help with classroom needs, it is also imperative to keeping local property taxes in check. With the end of the GEA, my focus will now turn to the Foundation Aid formula – we must ensure that the low-wealth, high-need school districts are receiving their fair share of state aid.

“The 2016-17 state budget provided more than \$1 billion for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to help more families pay for college. We can go further. The senate has passed legislation I continue to support to increase the income eligibility for TAP and to increase the tuition tax credit so more middle class families will receive help paying for the cost of college. I also want to help lower student loan debt. The senate has passed legislation creating the New York Student Affordable Refinancing for Tomorrow (New START) program to allow eligible students to refinance their private student loans through the state at a lower interest rate.”

Ethics Reform

A number of steps have been taken in recent years to tighten ethics laws and restore public trust in Albany. Additional measures must still be adopted.

“People should have complete faith and trust that the men and women they vote for are working for the public, not themselves. I take my oath of office to heart and want there to be no doubt that I am working for the people of the 51st Senate District and New York State.”

Senator Seward’s ethics reform agenda includes:

- Final approval of legislation stripping pensions from legislators convicted of a felony;
- Term limits for leadership positions and committee chairmen;
- Voter recall for elected officials.

Heroin

As a member of the Senate’s Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction since its inception in 2014, Senator Seward has been a leader in enacting new laws focused on addressing the heroin crisis.

“The heroin crisis has reached every segment of our population and is destroying individuals, families, and communities. I have helped enact a number of new laws to increase access to treatment and support those in recovery. I have also worked closely with community groups that are on the front lines of this epidemic to learn what is working and what more can be done to help save lives.

“Going forward, we must take additional steps to target drug kingpins who profit and prey on the addiction of others. One piece of legislation that would help would establish the crime of homicide by sale of an opioid controlled substance. The bill would allow law enforcement officials to charge a dealer with homicide if heroin or an opiate-controlled substance they sell causes an overdose death. The senate has passed the bill in each of the last three years, but the assembly has failed to consider the measure.”

Summary

“The priorities I have outlined only scratch the surface. There are many other pressing concerns – help for farmers, repealing the NY- SAFE Act, support for broadband expansion in rural areas – to name a few. As I work to address these concerns my objective is constant: create new opportunities for individuals to help grow our region of New York.”