



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Final Budget Should Exclude Proposals Negatively Affecting Western New York

SENATOR MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER March 15, 2017

| ISSUE: **COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY, TAXES AND FEES, DREAM ACT, STATE BUDGET**

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Monthly Column

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Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on March 15th

In January, Governor Andrew Cuomo unveiled his Executive Budget proposal. Since then, I have been carefully reviewing its details. This week, the State Senate will take action on its one-house budget resolution, modifying the Executive's initial plan and outlining our major priorities.

Overall, my focus is to enact a fiscally responsible State Budget that ensures a brighter future for Western New York. Part of that effort involves the rejection of misguided, and potentially disastrous, policies from the final plan.

For example, the Executive Budget put forth more than \$800 million in new tax actions, including a series of motor vehicle fees, new taxes on internet purchases and a new surcharge on pre-paid mobile phones.

This proposal is unacceptable. Western New Yorkers already pay enough. I strongly believe in reducing– not increasing– taxes. I will be advocating for a rejection of new taxes and fees.

Another problematic policy is the Governor's free college tuition plan. If enacted, this program would provide students free tuition at all public colleges and universities in New York State. The projected cost of the program is \$163 million per year.

His proposal would limit student choice by leaving our high school graduates with only one option, public institutions. That could lead to diminishing the efforts of our local private institutions, while causing disruptions at our SUNY schools.

I have heard from many residents, private and independent colleges, and higher education professionals. I share many of their concerns. The Governor's free college tuition plan is not the correct course.

Of course, as a parent, college affordability is on my mind, like so many Western New Yorkers. However, it is an issue that can be addressed by the state's existing Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). The TAP program is already helping thousands of young New Yorkers afford college. The eligibility requirements for the program should be expanded to aid thousands more.

Lastly, an exceptionally costly, as well as woefully misguided, initiative advanced in the Executive Budget is a plan to allow undocumented, illegal immigrants who meet in-state tuition requirements to receive state financial aid. In prior years, it has been introduced as a bill, known as the Dream Act, in the State Legislature.

Many Western New Yorkers have contacted my office in the past to share their opposition to the Dream Act. I continue to oppose granting state tuition assistance to undocumented workers with your tax dollars. I will be pushing for an exclusion of this provision from the final plan.

Each one of these proposals would negatively affect Western New York. As the April 1st budget deadline approaches, I will be working to keep them out of the 2017-18 State Budget. As always, I will be sure to keep you posted.