



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara urges Cuomo to keep state resources laser focused on emergency response: Warns that Cuomo-led 'government by executive order' has gone too far

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 10, 2020

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**Elmira, N.Y., May 7**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today urged Governor Andrew Cuomo to keep his administration's response to the COVID-19 emergency "laser focused on the short-term public health demands of this crisis and the need to get upstate back to work. We can't afford to draw attention and resources away from the immediate crisis by engaging now in grand and radical ideas to remake education and health care."

O'Mara was responding to Cuomo's announcements this week that the state will join forces with the Bill Gates Foundation to "reimagine" education in New York and with Google to transform the state's health care system.

Both moves are raising concerns among O'Mara and legislative colleagues, as well as state education and health care leaders, that Cuomo could try to implement far-reaching changes without input from the Legislature, stakeholders, and the public at large.

Since the state shutdown began in mid-March, Cuomo has issued hundreds of executive orders that effectively allow the governor to make state law unilaterally. A recent *Buffalo News* report, for example, estimated that Cuomo has already authorized nearly \$3 billion in spending on the COVID-19 response and some question whether the spending is being done with the appropriate, independent oversight.

According to O'Mara, expanding unilateral action by the governor is troubling.

O'Mara said, "We have been witnessing state government by executive order. While I agree that the immediate COVID-19 response has demanded an ability to respond swiftly, Governor Cuomo is going too far too fast unilaterally, and it raises serious and significant legislative concerns. The Cuomo administration needs to keep state resources and manpower laser focused on the immediate COVID-19 response. We need to weather this storm with fiscal responsibility and strict priorities. We do need to look ahead, but now is not

the time to take state resources away from this public health and economic emergency to pursue grand ideas and radical reforms for education, health care, or any other cornerstone of New York State's long-term future. There will be a time for all of that. Now is not that time and it can't be Governor Cuomo alone making those long-term reforms. It requires the involvement of the Legislature, education and health care stakeholders, and the public at large. I have stressed throughout the ongoing COVID-19 response that we need to be ready, once we weather this storm, to start an open and full discussion on the best ways to move forward for this entire state, upstate and downstate. It is going to require a restructuring of New York government, strengthening the state-local partnership, and getting back to work rebuilding New York with the right priorities, long-overdue commonsense reforms, and fiscal responsibility. I look forward to joining my Senate Republican colleagues throughout the months ahead to put forth strategies and work to ensure that our upstate regions don't get left behind in the unprecedented rebuilding and restructuring effort that we're facing."

Earlier this week O'Mara and Senate Republican colleagues said that they will be putting forth a "Reopen and Reset" strategy for the upstate regions they represent.

O'Mara, whose 58th Senate District covers most of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, said that he and other members of the state Senate GOP are discussing and developing strategies for upstate's post-coronavirus communities and economies focusing on several cornerstones including the steady rebuilding of increasing numbers of economic sectors, regulatory and tax reform, and mandate relief, among others.