



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara rejects fund to make taxpayer-financed payments to undocumented immigrants, recently released inmates: Fund seeks one-time payments approaching \$30,000 for some recipients

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 5, 2021

| ISSUE: **2021-22 STATE BUDGET**

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Albany, N.Y., April 5—State Senator Tom O'Mara today denounced talks underway between Governor Andrew Cuomo and Albany's legislative Democrats to include a first-in-the-nation, billion-dollar-plus fund in this year's state budget to provide retroactive unemployment benefits to undocumented immigrants and former prison inmates who were excluded from federal aid since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

News reports of the budget talks in recent days have pegged the size of the new fund, being called the "Excluded Workers Fund," as high as \$2.1 billion and some recipients would be in line to receive one-time payments of up to \$28,000.

It would be part of a 2021-2022 state budget being negotiated by Cuomo and legislative leaders that could raise taxes by nearly \$5 billion and put in motion billions upon billions of dollars in new spending for the foreseeable future.

O'Mara, the Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, said, "This Democrat budget could be the most radical tax-and-spend proposal to ever come out of Albany. The Albany Democrat giveaway being planned keeps going higher and higher, more and more out-of-control, and far beyond any reasonable sense of fairness, responsibility, or sustainability for hard-working, taxpaying citizens. This new taxpayer-financed fund for illegal immigrants and convicted felons is the latest example of just how out of touch it's become. We are facing an outrageous tax-and-spend plan that will force future generations of taxpayers to foot an enormous bill because the far-left, extremely liberal, largely New York City-based wing of the Democratic party is in control of the agenda and pushing for a wish list that promises a train wreck of a fiscal and economic future for New York State."

Over the past several weeks, O'Mara has highlighted Senate Republican priorities for utilizing the nearly \$13 billion in federal funding coming to New York through the American Rescue Plan. The GOP priorities include the rejection of new tax hikes, moving forward with a middle class tax cut that Cuomo had proposed to delay, broadband expansion, local government assistance, bolstering state reserve funds, and greater state investment in local infrastructure like roads and bridges, and water and sewer projects. He has also advanced a legislative amendment to exclude unemployment benefits from taxable income that would keep New York State consistent with an action already taken by the federal government to exclude the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits from 2020 taxable income.

O'Mara said, "We have an opportunity and a responsibility to utilize this one-time federal stimulus aid under a fiscally responsible, short- and long-term strategy for the post-COVID rebuilding, restoring, and resetting of New York State's communities. Among other priorities, we should reject tax hikes, focus on badly needed tax relief, and make critical investments in local infrastructure that will strengthen local communities, economies, environments and governments. Equally important, we need to recognize the fiscal challenges New York will face for the foreseeable future, steer clear of any massive new taxing and spending, and

bolster the state's emergency reserve funds.”