



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of January 16, 2023 -- 'Our 'Rescue New York' plan focuses on overlooked priorities'

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 17, 2023

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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and

policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Our 'Rescue New York' plan focuses on overlooked priorities"

Governor Hochul delivered her State of the State message to the Legislature last week. Now we wait and see how she plans to pay for it. Those answers start to arrive later this month when she unveils her proposed 2023-2024 state budget.

My initial reaction to the governor's broad outline of her priorities for New York's future is this: Governor Hochul highlighted the affordability crisis facing all New Yorkers, but every agenda item she spoke of will only make New York a more expensive place to live and do business. She appears intent on spending every last taxpayer dime, and then some. New York State remains one of America's highest-taxed, least affordable, most debt-ridden and overregulated states, and we're leading the nation in population loss. It is mind-boggling how Governor Hochul and legislative Democrats can boast about higher and higher state government spending.

One highlight of her address I do applaud is her commitment to improving New York's woeful mental health care system. Unfortunately, she only commits to one half of one percent of the state budget to restoring mental health beds statewide. This meager allocation of state resources -- one half of one percent -- won't even make up for the bed closures that ex-Governor Cuomo forced over the last decade in our state mental health facilities. Mental health care is a significant need for far too many New Yorker with its consequences of homelessness, addiction, and crime. This effort deserves a far greater commitment.

The day before Governor Hochul delivered her message, our Senate Republican conference proposed a plan called "Rescue New York." We have offered a broad range of policies focusing on public safety and security, mental health care, economic growth and job creation, tax relief and regulatory reform, and affordability initiatives to try to reverse New York's distressing outmigration.

New Yorkers across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions I represent, and statewide, are worried about making ends meet. They see this state becoming less safe, less affordable, less free, less economically competitive, less responsible, and far less hopeful for the future.

Albany Democrats readily acknowledge the affordability crisis causing the exodus of citizens to more affordable states; however, the Democrats can't give up increasing handouts to their base. They have no interest in reining in out-of-control spending, eliminating taxes, lowering costs, cutting burdensome regulations and mandates, or restoring public safety. We need to rescue New York by

restoring the right priorities, rebuilding stronger and safer communities, and working toward a more responsible and sustainable future for middle-class communities, families, workers, businesses, industries, and taxpayers.

In short, the “Rescue New York” agenda is a comprehensive plan to do just that. Among many initiatives, the plan focuses on:

- Restoring common sense and sanity to our criminal justice system;
- Increasing efforts to address the opioid and fentanyl crisis;
- Expanding economic opportunities and strengthening our workforce;
- Cutting New York’s highest-in-the-nation tax burden and controlling state government spending;
- Improving New York’s worst-in-the-nation business climate;
- Enacting energy policies that are affordable, reliable, and sustainable;
- Addressing the burgeoning Unemployment Insurance crisis; and
- Confronting long-neglected obstacles to local economic growth and tax relief like unfunded mandates, unreasonable overregulation, and the steady erosion of local decision-making.

I’ll be working with legislative colleagues across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, together with local leaders and concerned citizens, to keep attention focused on the goals and priorities we share for stronger and safer communities.

As noted at the outset, the next key benchmark arrives later this month when Governor Hochul begins rolling out her 2023-2024 proposed state budget. That’s where we truly begin finding out how her broad State of the State promises get implemented and, especially, paid for.

I was recently reappointed as the Ranking Republican member on the Senate Finance Committee, which oversees the Legislature’s annual budget adoption process. I hope to utilize this post to at least give a voice to the challenges and crises facing our region and all of Upstate New York.

Remember that you can find more details on the Rescue New York agenda [HERE](#).