

KOLB'S KEY

MAY 2010

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Dear Neighbor,

“Is state government working for you?” Nearly everywhere I go – from Western New York to New York City – the answer to that question is an overwhelming “No!”

It’s apparent that New York State government is in desperate need of an “Extreme Makeover.” Over 800,000 New Yorkers are out of work, we have some of the highest taxes in the nation, a record deficit and, this year, we have the 21st late state budget since 1985. Clearly, the status quo is broken because our state government is not working for taxpayers or the businesses that create jobs in the Empire State.

In this issue of Kolb’s Key, I outline steps the Assembly Minority Conference and I are working on to reboot, revise and renew state government and give it the kind of “Extreme Makeover” it so desperately needs.

Taxpayers are fed up, frustrated and angry, and they have every right to be: state government has grown too big, too costly, and too removed from the everyday lives and real needs of the people it is supposed to serve. What people do not want is more rhetoric or talk of change, but genuine action, follow-through and real solutions. Now, more than ever, we must reform government and make it work again.

As always, please don’t hesitate to contact my district office at (315) 781-2030, or e-mail me at kolbb@assembly.state.ny.us on how, together, we can bring New York back.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Kolb
Assembly Minority Leader

P.S. Help us stop government waste, log onto www.reformny.org.

STATE GOVERNMENT NEEDS AN “EXTREME MAKEOVER”

“State government needs an ‘extreme makeover’-from top to bottom-because the status quo is not working for taxpayers.”

This year’s late state budget is the most recent, glaring example of why New York’s broken state government needs an “Extreme Makeover” -- from top to bottom -- because the status quo is not working for taxpayers. To make an extreme makeover a reality, we need to reform, renew and reboot how our state government works. Recently, I called for Governor David Paterson and my fellow Legislative Leaders to join me in a public budget forum to be broadcast and televised live, statewide.

A public budget forum would allow New Yorkers to learn exactly where the Governor and each Legislative Conference in the Assembly and Senate stand on the critical issues confronting us. It would allow everyone to outline their specific plans for closing New York’s \$9.05 billion budget deficit. The forum could be moderated and aired live on cable news, public television and radio stations and streamed live via the Internet.

Last year’s state budget was put together using a closed-door, secretive process that excluded the Minority Conferences. The spending plan it produced was fiscally irresponsible, containing \$8.2 billion in new taxes and fees, and a nearly 10 percent hike in government spending.

Fast forward to 2010: Governor Paterson and the Legislative Majorities have not yet been able to put together a fiscally responsible economic plan and are still talking about spending more money than last year – and borrowing \$2 billion along the way.

Particularly frustrating is that the Governor and Legislative Majorities followed the same bad game plan from 2009 and, in so doing, essentially shut out taxpayers, as well as the media, from what should be a completely open, transparent and accountable budget process. **We can do better, and New Yorkers deserve better.**

State government desperately needs an “Extreme Makeover” that will build a strong foundation of true transparency and greater accountability to taxpayers. That’s why I am also advocating for a People’s Convention to Reform New York to end the gridlock and political conflict in Albany. The People’s Convention to Reform New York is a grassroots, non-partisan reform effort to empower citizens so they can take back their state government and, in the process, chart a positive, new direction for New York. Visit www.reformny.org to join the more than 2,000 New Yorkers who have signed the on-line petition calling for a People’s Convention.

New Yorkers deserve better from Albany, and the public budget forum and People’s Convention to Reform New York would help deliver the type of “Extreme Makeover” that New York State government so desperately needs.





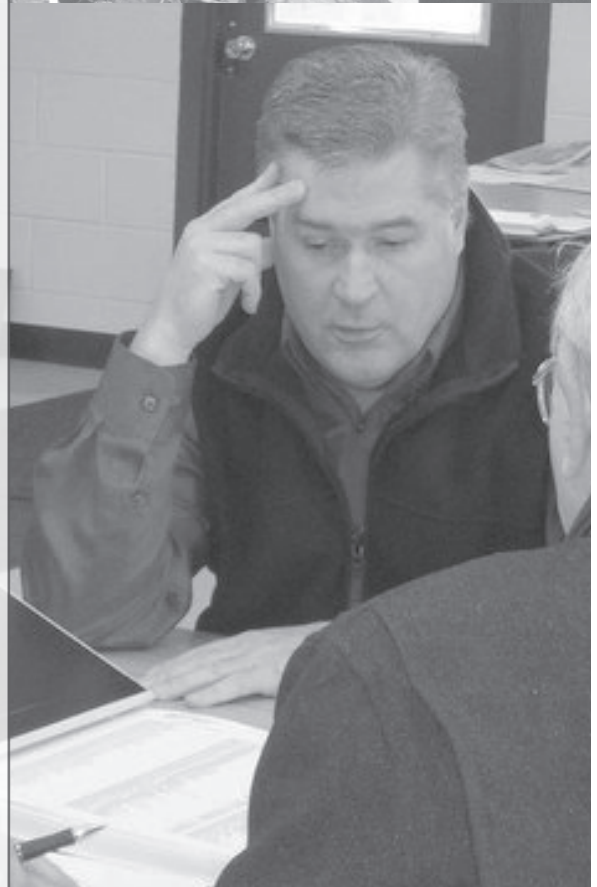
REFORM BUDGET PROCESS FOR A BETTER BUDGET

We only need to look at last year's bad budget, secretly hatched behind closed doors by "Three Men in a Room" and away from the public and media to see what happens when there's no transparency. That budget socked taxpayers with \$8.2 billion in new taxes and fees, hiked government spending by nearly 10 percent, and exploded the budget deficit. Taxpayers can't afford another sequel. This year's late state budget is the 21st late budget since 1985. A late state budget delays payments to businesses, hurts the economy and forces more people out of work. Late state budgets also make it hard for local school districts to do any sort of long-term planning. I want to fix this.

I support three initiatives (Assembly Bills A.5742, A.5743 and A.5729) to reform how our state budget is developed, decided and adopted. These bills:

- Prohibit consideration of non-budget bills after April 1st until the budget is adopted;
- Limit year-to-year increases in spending to no more than the rate of inflation;
- Increase the Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund;
- Provide a "Plain Language" Summary of the Budget 48 hours prior to vote;
- Require two-year education funding;
- Prohibit legislative recess until adoption of a budget; and
- Require that the previous year's budget be put in place no later than 72 hours after the start of a new fiscal year to ensure an on-time budget if a new budget is not adopted by April 1st.

New Yorkers deserve a better budget that has no new taxes, does not add more state debt, has a comprehensive jobs plan and is negotiated openly and in full view of taxpayers.



STOP GOVERNMENT WASTE

Waste, fraud and abuse cost New York taxpayers billions of dollars every year. A 2005 New York Times exposé reported that fraud in the state's Medicaid program alone could "reach into the billions."

Just a few examples of the billions in waste, fraud and abuse across New York State government include:

- A dentist who fraudulently billed the state Medicaid program for what she claimed were 991 dental procedures per day.
- A taxpayer-financed "Man Cave" where two state employees sold illegal drugs, smoked marijuana and took naps while on official duty.
- The State Education Department spending \$200,000 on top-of-the-line office furniture.
- A school official in Buffalo who sent 4,434 students into speech therapy in a single day, without even talking to them or reviewing their records.

As part of our continued fight to prevent waste, fraud and abuse, we have launched a new web site – www.stopgovernmentwasteny.com – to help taxpayers anonymously report any waste of taxpayer dollars. Your anonymous tip could help us bring New York back!



Stop Government Waste, Visit:
stopgovernmentwasteny.com

HAVE A PROBLEM WITH AN OVERZEALOUS STATE AGENCY? IF SO, I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT!



Whether you're seeking a fishing license, renewing a vehicle registration or submitting your state tax returns, it's no exaggeration to say that State Agencies touch many aspects of your life.

In my travels as Assembly Minority Leader, I've been approached by business owners and taxpayers who are frustrated and, in some cases, angry, with the overzealous, costly and bureaucratic approach of some State Agencies.

Whether it's due to our state's \$9.05 billion budget deficit and agencies facing pressure to generate revenue, or an absence of proper direction from the current administration, any proven abuses by State Agencies must stop. With over 800,000 New Yorkers unemployed, we can't let the arbitrary actions of a few State Agencies stifle our economic recovery.

As a Legislative Leader and former private-sector businessman who built and operated successful manufacturing companies, I know that without proper oversight, State Agencies can become significant obstacles to the innovations New York's struggling economy needs.

How You Can Help:

- ➔ **Business Owners:** Has a State Agency imposed an overly punitive or costly fine on you or your business? Do you feel as if a State Agency has unfairly targeted your business with overzealous enforcement or unnecessary regulatory interference?
- ➔ **Taxpayers:** Has a State Agency been unresponsive or denied an otherwise legitimate request for assistance made by you or your loved ones? Has a State Agency refused to provide answers related to your questions on the basic operations of New York's government?
- ➔ **Local Elected Officials:** Has a State Agency impeded local economic development projects or made arbitrary decisions that have negatively impacted the community you serve?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, please contact my office! Any comments received will be compiled to aid us in developing common-sense legislative remedies. Our responsibility: to be the taxpayers' servant, not their master.