

2009 Chamber Legislative Agenda

The Board of Directors of *The Otsego County Chamber* hereby resolves to support a 2009 NYS Legislative Agenda that promotes the following major concepts:

Fairness: Levels the playing field for all businesses to be able to compete in the financial situation that currently exists.

Accountability: Strongly demands and urges our elected representatives to show vigorous, effective leadership in and support for the reduction in the burdensome cost of all levels of government.

Reduced Spending: New York's financial crisis is not one of revenue, it is spending. The cost of government and education continues to outpace the economic growth of our taxpayers. Until the spending binge is reduced, the economy will not be able to develop to allow for personal income growth in this State.

No New Taxes or Fees: These backdoor taxes only hide the real cost of government and its need for money. Government need to review its scope of services in line with the constitutional role of government. Those items that are "the legitimate" role should be supported directly from the general fund and not be special fees and assessments

Dedicated SUNY Tuition: We should not balance the state's spending habits be "sweeping" away an increase in tuition for college. SUNY campuses should be able to keep all the tuition revenue and be able to operate under a rational tuition policy that sets the fee based upon campus needs and not legislative edict.

No Unfunded Mandates to Local Government/Schools: The state can not be allowed to balance its spending glut by passing down to the cities, towns and schools boards the cost of mandated programs. If the feds or the state wants to mandate any service, program or reporting function then the must fund it.

No Mandates on Health Insurance Coverage: No more mandated coverage or services to the small group and other markets for health insurance without funding to pay for it. No new taxes on health insurance to balance the budget as these costs will only be added to the premium cost for the subscribers. NYS has one of the highest costs, and the most mandated specific coverage, for health insurance.

Expand BOCES Role Regional Educational Shared Services: Schools districts and the State Education Department should use the investment in the BOCES system to help component districts to share services/activities to reduce the cost to individual districts such as: Centralized reporting to the state, centralizes human resource activities, centralized union negotiations, and others

functions that component district are able to save money and improve efficiencies.

Enhance Consolidation / Shared Services Activities: We must devise efficient methods to investigate the logical consolidation of governmental entities and agencies to maximize the services to our citizens at an affordable cost.

This resolution is effective immediately, and will be presented to our elected representative in writing. Resolution was approved 21 to 00 on Thursday, February 19, 2009.

And here, in basic terms is why the agenda is important to you!

We must return logic to the discussion of the role of government in the lives of our employees and citizens. It is our responsibility to educate our employees and their families of how the NYS spending glut indirectly affects their paycheck and ability to advance their careers and everyone's economic stability. For example: We must be aggressive in efforts to explain that the STAR Exemption is only on residential properties and that the fully assessed increased property tax on commercial properties directly impacts the pool of money we have to grant pay raises and create new positions

New York's financial crisis is not one of pending. Until the spending binge is controlled, our economy will not be able to develop the economic opportunities to allow for personal income growth in this state.

New York State funds itself by adding small fees and taxes on a large variety of items that blur the overall tax bite. These backdoor taxes only hide the real cost of government and its need for money. By example: Look how the proposed multiple fees may impact a family moving from Westchester to Otsego County. What may have been a two mile trip to the train now has become 50 mile round trip from new home to the new job. Add to that now one needs snow tires, maintenance costs on the car increases, and the resale value decreases. Then the average income in Westchester is not the same as Otsego although the proposed fee is the same. It impacts our residents much more. And lastly, that proposal to double the \$5/fee on auto insurance policies to 'pay for the state police' begs a different public policy question which is: Why are the state police not paid for out of the general fund as a broader public good?

New York has one of the highest costs, and the most mandated specific coverage, for health insurance. Yet, Albany wants to mandate more coverage or services to the small group and other markets for health insurance without funding to pay for it. And, like the Budget Reconciliation Bill passed last month, Albany raised taxes on health insurance to balance the budget. Those costs will only be added to the premium cost for the subscriber and threatens the ability for employers to offer coverage for their employees.

Albany will continue to spend your pay raise and the money for our kid's employment opportunity, unless each and every one of us tell them to stop. The money that is taken by new taxes and fees is the same dollars that would have been invested into higher wages, better opportunities and more jobs. Those extra fees and taxes that you, as a homeowner and resident, will be asked to pay will come out of your existing paycheck – will you be in your employer's office asking for a raise to cover your increase living expenses? Who wins if you don't speak up to your elected official? Increased government spending!

Your family, your neighbors and your employer need you to speak up, loudly, and demand that – like all of us – government live within its means and stop reaching into our back pockets. There is nothing that New York is facing that can't be resolved by government budgetary restraint and freedom for small business to create 250,000 new taxpayers. Let's practice personal responsibility and logic, work with our leaders to reverse the state's policies that are driving out 250,000 residents a year, and create the new opportunities for our grandchildren. It is up to you. Will you join the discussion?