



A NEW HOPE
FOR THE
EMPIRE
STATE

2024 AGENDA REPORT

SENATE REPUBLICAN
CONFERENCE

Hon. Robert G. Ortt
Senate Republican Leader



THE SENATE REPUBLICANS' 2024 AGENDA



A Plan to Increase Affordability, Improve Public Safety, and Build a Greater New York

Over the last five years, New Yorkers have had a front-row seat to what unaccountable government looks like. One-party control has made New York increasingly unaffordable. Residents feel unsafe and are unsure that things will get better in the future. Far too many New Yorkers have looked at this sad reality and decided the only option was to leave the state for somewhere they can make a better life for their families.

The New York Senate Republican Conference has a plan to bring accountability to state government and fight every day to give New Yorkers the State they deserve. A place that is more affordable, where they can feel safe. A greater New York where they have the opportunity to build a better and brighter life for themselves and their families.



Increasing Affordability for New Yorkers

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic and then the extended period of high inflation that followed, New Yorkers have struggled with the highest taxes in the nation and high costs of living that have resulted in thousands of New Yorkers fleeing to more affordable states. Due to our pre-existing sky-high taxes and poor business climate, the economic challenges of the last few years have hit New Yorkers particularly hard, and sadly there appears to be no help on the horizon under One Party Rule in Albany.

The Senate Republican conference is fighting to change this and provide the support New Yorkers need. We plan to make New York more affordable by:

Reigning In Out-Of-Control Spending

- **Permanently capping state spending** by making the two-percent spending cap permanent and increasing the State's authorization to deposit funds in the Rainy Day Fund.
- **Continuing to fight against misguided tax increases** by requiring a supermajority for tax hikes and phasing out temporary tax provisions.
- **Limiting backdoor borrowing** by amending the state constitution and controlling state debt by broadening the debt cap and requiring voter approval of capital debt backed by revenue.
- **Enacting a nearly \$300 million annual tax cut for New York taxpayers** by indexing the State's income tax brackets, standard deduction, and dependent exemptions to inflation.
- **Saving middle-class taxpayers roughly \$650 million** by simplifying the tax code and ending a regressive practice by eliminating "tax benefit recapture" provisions.
- **Providing \$2.2 billion in direct relief to taxpayers** by making the Property Tax Rebate program permanent and returning billions of dollars to hardworking individuals and families.
- **Eliminating costly unfunded mandates that drive up local property taxes** by requiring the State to fund any future programs, placing a moratorium on any new unfunded mandates, and creating a Mandate Review Council to eliminate or suspend costly and ineffective mandates.
- **Reducing property taxes by \$2.3 billion** by requiring the State to pick up the local share of Medicaid outside of New York City over five years and local governments to return the savings along to property taxpayers.
- **Easing Medicaid burden on localities** by preventing the State from redirecting county Medicaid funding by requiring the State to share enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (eFMAP) funds with county governments and preventing the state from absorbing these vital funds.
- **Increasing fiscal transparency** by empowering the comptroller and authorities budget office to have greater oversight over state authorities including the Thruway Authority and the MTA.
- **Opposing the New York Health Act (statewide single-payer health plan)** which would at minimum double taxes in New York State, result in historical job loss and leave the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers at risk.



Increasing Affordability for New Yorkers

Making New York Affordable and Empowering Taxpayers

- **Ensuring accessible and affordable health care** by phasing out the Health Care Reform Act's onerous insurance taxes, establishing the New York state health care quality and cost containment commission and fighting to reduce costs on life saving care.
- **Providing relief from heating costs** by creating a refundable heating tax credit of \$300 per individual making under \$125,000 in annual income and \$600 per married couple making under \$250,000 in annual income.
- **Cutting electric bills** by eliminating the 18a utility surcharge, saving ratepayers over \$100 million.
- **Providing a tax credit for overtaxed utility bills** by crediting back money ratepayers were forced to pay in local utility taxes.
- **Addressing the childcare affordability crisis** by increasing assistance subsidies for working families, supporting a strong childcare workforce by implementing apprenticeship programs and designing career pathways; and expanding the supply of childcare by supporting capital investments in building new sites, expediting the process for establishing new childcare businesses, and further incentivizing employer-sponsored/provided care options.
- **Providing commuters relief** by repealing the congestion pricing scheme that will cost those commuting into the Business District of Manhattan \$1 billion annually.
- **Protecting private property rights** by opposing so-called "Good Cause Eviction" legislation and rolling back rent regulation.
- **Incentivizing new housing construction to deal with the housing shortage by:**
 - extending New York City's 421-A program and creating a new 421-P tax credit program for Upstate housing options;
 - starting the New York Housing Opportunity Fund to reward localities for housing development instead of punishing them through mandates;
 - creating new tax credit programs for manufactured housing and housing-related infrastructure;
 - establishing a program where the State may pre-approve parcels for housing development and waiving certain state regulations for projects that create ten or more homes and/or apartments upon a municipality's request.



Increasing Affordability for New Yorkers

Supporting and Protecting Our Seniors

- **Providing significant property tax relief to seniors** by doubling the STAR benefit for seniors to ensure they can continue to stay in their homes.
- **Reducing the financial burden on retirees** by increasing the amount of private pension and/or retirement income that is tax-free above the current \$20,000 limit and adding 401(k) and 403(b) accounts to the list of eligible income deductions when determining Enhanced STAR eligibility.
- **Improving access to resources for seniors** by providing funds and reimbursement to towns and villages to purchase buses to transport senior citizens to various events offered in their communities.
- **Supporting nursing home and adult care facility residents** by creating both a hotline and statewide central register of elder abuse, as well as providing a safeguard against government overreach during public health emergencies.
- **Investing in the stability of New York's long term care residential facilities** by requiring the state to recalculate Medicaid rates to reflect growth in the cost of procedures.
- **Expanding home care options for aging New Yorkers** including bolstering our home care workforce and providing tax benefits for family caregivers.
- **Protecting the safety of our seniors** by establishing criminal offenses committed against the elderly or disabled including willful neglect and endangerment.



Increasing Affordability for New Yorkers

Improving New York's Worst-in-the-Nation Business Climate

- **Taking action to protect businesses from unemployment insurance tax increases** resulting from pandemic-related job losses by adjusting rates, paying down the deficit, and creating an Unemployment Insurance Solvency Reserve Fund.
- **Reducing bureaucratic red tape** by simplifying and streamlining the State's rulemaking and licensing practices, reforming the State's project-killing development process, fast-tracking the appeals process, and reining in overzealous State agencies.
- **Providing a \$464 million tax cut for small businesses** by increasing the corporate tax threshold from \$390,000 to \$500,000 and lowering the rate to 2.5 percent, expanding the small business exemption to all PIT businesses regardless of whether they have employees and increasing the threshold to \$500,000, the exemption to 15 percent, and the exemption to 20 percent for farmers.
- **Making New York more competitive** by reducing mandates on businesses of all sizes and bringing the State's excessive salaried overtime threshold (\$58,500 downstate and \$48,750 upstate) in line with the federal threshold (\$35,568) and fighting against further minimum wage increases.
- **Providing new economic opportunities** by moving away from ineffective and costly large, incentive-laden projects to focus on growing small-to-medium sized businesses through best practices such as customized job training, manufacturing extension services, and expanding small business development assistance.
- **Incentivizing domestic innovation** by expanding the Excelsior Research and Development Tax Credit to allow participants in the Excelsior Jobs Program to claim a credit equal to the portion of the full cost of the participant's research and development expenses incurred that relates to the participant's research and development expenditures in New York State during the taxable year.
- **Protecting our agriculture** by rolling back the harmful decision by the Farm Laborers Wage Board to lower farm workers' overtime threshold to 40 hours, making the Farm Workforce Retention Credit permanent, creating a refundable investment tax credit for agriculture, investing in new meat, vegetable, fruit, and seafood processing facilities; establishing the "Farmland for a New Generation" program and supporting Made in New York products by creating a tax credit for small businesses that sell a certain percentage of products produced in New York State.



Increasing Affordability for New Yorkers

Supporting Energy Policies that Ensure Access to Affordable, Sustainable and Clean Energy

- **Requiring full accountability of all proposals from the Climate Action Council**, especially on proposals mandating energy producers to raise utility rates before a vote by the legislature, requiring a cost analysis of the energy targets established under the CAC and requiring that utility bills include all costs to consumers associated with CLCPA mandates.
- **Supporting diverse energy sources** by recognizing the importance of natural gas and biofuels, providing parity to zero-emissions technologies (ex. hydroelectric, nuclear) by utilizing technology-agnostic standards and targets, investing in and welcoming burgeoning technologies such as next-generation nuclear and hydrogen and rapidly phasing out tax incentives/subsidies when technologies have matured and gained market self-sufficiency.
- **Ensuring a sustainable power supply for New York Consumers** by enacting a temporary moratorium on the State shutting down any energy-producing facilities unless public safety is directly threatened while alternatives become more reliable or come online.
- **Fighting against anti-market and costly mandates on New Yorkers** such as the prohibition on fossil fuel systems in new buildings and the ban on new internal combustion engines after 2035.
- **Advocating for electric bus mandate relief** by committing to legislative action that seeks relief for school districts and communities that would be placed under significant logistical and financial burdens in working towards compliance with the current statutory timelines.

Safeguarding Integrity and Accountability in State Government

- **Restoring New Yorker's confidence in state government** by reforming government in the Legislative and Executive Branches by requiring that minority members be represented on all legislatively enacted workgroups, task forces and commissions.
- **Standing up for New Yorkers against overreach** by opposing unnecessary and inappropriate government mandates and protecting our state and federal constitutional rights.
- **Protecting taxpayers by Increasing transparency and efficiency and limiting the influence of special interests in the budgeting process** by creating a Legislative Budget Office to provide objective, non-partisan analysis, requiring the budget to be balanced in terms of generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), limiting the use of messages of necessity, putting in place new reporting requirements for lump sum allocations, enforcing quarterly reporting requirements; and limiting non-budget legislation included in the State Budget.
- **Enhancing state fiscal oversight** by fully funding the Authorities Budget Office (ABO) and fully restoring the Comptroller's authority in law to pre-emptively review all state contracts.

Safeguarding Rights of Local Government

- **Protecting and strengthening local control** by improving our home rule laws, clarifying that local emergencies supersede state emergencies, requiring a municipality's approval before relocating people such as migrant populations into such municipality and reimbursing local school districts for costs associated with the relocation of migrant students.



Improving Public Safety for New Yorkers

According to the most recent poll released by Siena, almost three-quarters of all New Yorkers feel that crime is a major issue, but you wouldn't be able to tell that by looking at the policies that Albany Democrats have passed in the last five years. It's well past time to re-balance our public safety system by putting victims first and holding criminals accountable for their actions. The Senate Republican Conference will continue to fight for the safety of the public by:

Reforming our Criminal Justice System to Prioritize Public Safety Over the Interests of Criminals

- **Protecting New Yorkers from anti-semitism and other hateful violence** by making any anti-semitic behavior a hate crime, making hate crimes bail eligible, protecting hate crime victims' identity during the discovery process, making trespass at a house of worship a hate crime, implementing anti-semitism trainings on college campuses and through the Municipal Police Training Council, implementing penalties for colleges and college students who condone and/or engage in anti-semitic behavior, and by increasing funds for the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes grant program.
- **Rejecting efforts to continue New York's sanctuary state status** by repealing this policy or withholding funding for migrant services until cities do so.
- **Reversing criminal justice policies** that have made our communities less safe including Bail and Discovery Reform, Less is More, HALT and Clean Slate.
- **Rejecting criminal-first proposals** such as elder parole and sentencing reform.
- **Restoring judicial discretion in our criminal justice system** by giving judges the ability to set bail based on risk and the danger posed by a defendant.
- **Rejecting radical calls to defund the police and increasing investments in local law enforcement** by creating the SAFER Communities Grant Program, increasing support for State park police by increasing officer recruitment; retention, ensuring a properly equipped, skilled, and diverse park officer force and creating law enforcement and firefighter grant programs to provide local law enforcement agencies and fire departments with funding to hire more first responders as well as funding for fire stations.
- **Fighting against dangerous street drug crimes** by establishing the crime of homicide by sale of an opiate-controlled substance and penalizing offenders that cause opioid-related illness or death, increasing penalties for the sale, transportation, or processing of Fentanyl, making drug offenses bail eligible and allowing judges to remand someone to treatment, designating xylazine (A.K.A. Tranq) as a Schedule I Controlled Substance and prohibiting the establishment of "safe injection sites."
- **Protecting and supporting crime victims** by restricting the release of identifying information and access to crime scenes, protecting witnesses from intimidation, increasing reimbursements for crime victims, investing in victim support programs, putting in place policies to protect victims' rights during the parole process and increasing penalties for those who commit domestic violence offenses and sexual assaults.
- **Reducing violent crimes with illegal guns** by increasing funding for gun interdiction efforts, increasing penalties for crimes committed with stolen firearms, requiring mandatory consecutive sentences for crimes involving an illegal firearm and making any misdemeanor or felony offense involving the use or possession of a firearm, shotgun, or rifle bail eligible.



Improving Public Safety for New Yorkers

Reforming our Criminal Justice System to Prioritize Public Safety Over the Interests of Criminals cont'd

- **Protecting those on the road** by increasing penalties for repeat drunk drivers, vehicular assaults and homicides and hit and runs, and suspending licenses for drivers who refuse to comply with a Drug Recognition Expert evaluation.
- **Addressing the rise in retail theft** by enhancing penalties for repeat shoplifters and looters.
- **Protecting New Yorkers from the disastrous implementation of the legalization of marijuana** by enhancing penalties for illegal cannabis shops, giving municipalities the ability to ban cannabis use in public places, and the creation of a Cannabis-Induced Impaired Driving Task Force assess the need for updated impaired driving laws in the wake of legalization.

Confronting the Substance Use and Mental Health Epidemics

- **Increasing inpatient and outpatient mental health treatment options** by increasing state mental health funding levels and funding more mental health beds and placing a 5-year moratorium on bed reductions at State hospitals and requiring any public hearings and legislative approval before any future reductions as part of the OMH facility Transformation Plan, and by making Kendra's Law permanent and expanding the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Program.
- **Expanding access to mental health services in our schools** by establishing a Mental Health Services Coordinator Program, reimbursing school districts for the hiring of mental health services professionals, providing targeted State-aid to address mental health issues related to remote learning and social isolation, authorizing school districts to include suicide prevention in their curriculum and raising awareness to students through mental health fairs.
- **Reducing overdose deaths and closing treatment gaps** by increasing heroin and opioid prevention and treatment funding, providing additional funding for drug courts; expanding peer support programs and increasing the availability of naloxone and medication-assisted treatment.
- **Further expanding crisis stabilization centers throughout New York** by supporting local efforts to establish centers, opening state-operated centers, establishing a crisis intervention demonstration program and supporting efforts to establish peer support programs for first responders.
- **Ensuring funds continue to be used for the treatment of opioid use disorder and preventing overdose deaths** through opioid settlement funds.
- **Supporting mental health, disability, and other human services direct care workforce** by continuing to increase their cost-of-living adjustment.
- **Providing continuity of care for those suffering from mental health disorders** by establishing measures to prevent disenrollment for children from Medicaid such as implementing "grace period" policies, developing "emergency coverage" plans, and calling for the full delay of redeterminations for families with children until the end of the unwinding period and by establishing new pathways for licensed mental health counselors and other mental health professionals to expand the available workforce.



Improving Public Safety for New Yorkers

Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of New York's Court System

- **Increasing funding for family courts and housing courts** to reduce backlogs and facilitate prompt resolution of disputes
- **Expediting family offense proceedings in family court** by requiring the scheduling of fact-finding hearings within fourteen days of the issuance of a temporary order of protection
- **Expanding the ability of courts to address substance abuse** by utilizing opioid settlement funds for drug court programs and giving judges the option to remand offenders who are at risk of serious harm from substance abuse to treatment.



Building a Greater New York

While it is vitally important to ensure that the public is safe and can afford to live in New York, it will take more than that to allow New Yorkers to truly thrive. In order to build a New York that deserves the title of “Empire State,” we need to be forward looking and make sure that current and future residents have a greater New York to experience the American Dream. The Senate Republican Conference will fight to make a greater New York by:

Empowering New York’s Students and Parents

- **Closing the pandemic learning loss gap** by ensuring unspent Federal emergency relief aid supports academic recovery programs (e.g. intensive daily tutoring), expanding state grant funding, creating an office in the State Education Department to track outcomes of such programs and by focusing on future aid increases for early education to ensure students are provided a solid foundation for future academic challenges.
- **Expanding school choice options** by eliminating or increasing the charter school cap.
- **Protecting and expanding educational opportunities for all students** by supporting the use of the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) to determine admission to New York City’s specialized high schools, increasing access to advanced placement courses, and ensuring special education students have access to the resources they need to thrive.
- **Setting high standards of performance** through accountability, rewarding and retaining high-performing teachers, structured teacher support and training efforts, providing a greater degree of autonomy to principals in personnel and budget decisions, and removing barriers to entering the teaching profession thereby opening the door to a larger and more diverse applicant pool.
- **Meeting the nutritional needs of students** by providing funding for food backpack programs, the continuation of free breakfast and lunch programs for all students, and more local sourcing of food supplies.
- **Committing greater resources for school building security** by establishing a school resource officer (SRO) education grant program to reimburse school districts outside the city of New York, for the hiring of an SRO and establishing the school safety specialist act.
- **Protecting parental rights** by ensuring school officials are transparent, communicating properly, and including parents in decisions regarding their child, and by protecting and expanding school choice.



Building a Greater New York

Helping our Veterans and Military Families Thrive

- **Providing critical health and mental health treatment and support to our veterans** by expanding and making funding permanent for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Program and local veteran service agencies, expanding the number of Veterans Treatment Courts across New York State and establishing the “New York’s Own Combat Veterans Healthcare Choice Program Act” to establish tax-free savings accounts to pay the healthcare costs of certain combat veterans until covered by the federal government.
- **Expanding business assistance to veteran-owned enterprises** by reserving 6% of state contracts for service-disabled veterans.
- **Ensuring access to education for veterans by creating the veterans’ SUNY/CUNY Compact** which would provide free SUNY/CUNY tuition to all veterans to ensure higher education resources are accessible.
- **Securing funds for American Legions or VFWs** by establishing a path for them to administratively apply for grants.

Stimulating Job Growth and Economic Opportunities

- **Bolstering workforce education** by creating a statewide industry certification policy that establishes a process for identifying in-demand credentials by region, tracking attainment and employment outcomes, and incentivizing colleges to offer and provide credit for in-demand industry credentials and encouraging community colleges to consolidate their non-credit and credit workforce education programs under one roof.
- **Incentivizing Career and Technical Education Opportunities** by providing BOCES with enhanced incentives and resources to increase the number of skilled trade graduates in New York, and increasing state support for CTE by phasing in an increase of aidable salaries for CTE teachers, expanding opportunities to provide career and technical education to younger students and students with disabilities, and expanding the number of SED-approved technical assessments, developing career and college exploration curricula in our schools and increasing support for and utilization of BOCES by expanding pathways to high school graduation; supporting innovative programs by providing flexibility and support for school districts to collaborate to form regional technical high schools.
- **Incentivizing public and private partnerships to align worker skills with industry needs** by centralizing apprenticeship programs, funding regionally-driven/ industry-led career pathways/sectoral partnerships, and adopting Invest in Skills NY “credential passport” enabling participants in various pathways (CTE, BOCES, etc.) to transition seamlessly from institution to institution.
- **Expanding New York’s skilled workforce** by eliminating unnecessary occupational licensing restrictions, promoting interstate professional licensing reciprocity, eliminating unnecessary college education requirements for state/local government employment, and expanding the Employee Training Incentive Program (E-TIP) tax credit.
- **Providing roughly \$200 million in targeted tax relief to hardworking families** and support work by Increasing New York’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) benefit to 35 percent of the federal credit.
- **Upgrading workforce development facilities and technology** by investing funds at community colleges, noncredit programs, BOCES, public libraries, and local one-stop career centers.



Building a Greater New York

Investing in Sustainable Infrastructure

- **Ensuring broadband for all New Yorkers** by requiring State-funded projects to be based on accurate availability data, clearing the way for new technologies, reducing the cost of deployment by eliminating prevailing wage requirements on State-funded broadband projects, mapping areas with broadband deficiency and providing a refundable tax credit for residents and small businesses in rural areas that pay out-of-pocket expenses for network construction costs.
- **Requiring funding parity between Upstate and Downstate infrastructure funding** by putting NYSDOT and MTA capital programs on equal footing.
- **Supporting investment in local roads and bridges** by increasing Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) base aid.
- **Prioritizing projects that provide high-rate returns** on investments to the economy, public safety, and the environment via a coordinated capital planning process for infrastructure investment.
- **Reducing project costs through regulatory reform**, rationalizing the environmental review process, and the implementation of innovative practices such as best value procurement.
- **Protecting our drinking water** by increasing funding for a safe, reliable water and sewer infrastructure and by studying the effectiveness of pond and lake management programs and providing for the comprehensive control and mitigation and emergency response of harmful algal blooms in both marine and freshwater.
- **Making New York more resilient to extreme weather events and the impact of climate change** by hardening our shorelines, taking additional steps to mitigate coastal erosion and flooding and ensuring we have well-designed protocols in place to keep residents safe during weather-related emergencies.