

On January 7, Governor David Paterson delivered his first State of the State address to a joint session of both the State Senate and Assembly. In a departure from the heavily scripted speeches of his predecessors, he opened his remarks by quoting a short nineteenth-century poem, “Opportunity”, by Edwin Rowland Sill. It tells of a wounded and weaponless prince who seizes a deserter’s castoff sword and leads his troops to victory. Reminding us that, “We are the sons and daughters of New York’s royalty. We will waver but keep fighting,” Gov. Paterson encouraged the Legislature to seize the opportunities before us to lead the state in a new direction.

He noted that the budget deficit is growing by \$60 million a day. Saying that we can overcome this “terrific challenge”, he cited unexpected turning points in New York State’s past, such as the Battle of Saratoga in 1777, and the construction of the Erie Canal in 1817 (which even Thomas Jefferson called “madness”).

On a very positive note, however, Gov. Paterson specifically mentioned the **Say Yes to Education** program, calling for its expansion in the education portion of his speech. (See highlight below.)

Demanding “leadership, not partisanship”, Gov. Paterson proposed action on the following five fronts.

#### *Education*

- “The road to economic development runs through our schools.”
- Every child must be prepared for, and be able to pay for, college.
- Called for the establishment of the \$35M New York State Higher Education Loan program (low-cost loans).
- Cited need for more private-public partnerships.
- **Called for expanding the successful Say Yes to Education program.**

#### *Energy and the Environment*

- Called energy our “new rate of exchange”.
- Proposed “45 by 15” plan—meet 45% of the state’s energy needs via clean, renewable energy by 2015.
- Create clearinghouse of information about energy efficiency programs for schools, hospitals and local governments.
- Create an Upstate research consortium on hybrid electric batteries for automobiles and electric storage technologies.
- Create New York Energy Policy Institute to coordinate expertise of our colleges and universities. It will distribute information on energy technologies and policies. NYSERDA would commit \$150-200K for 3-5 years.

#### *Economic Development*

- Called upon Congress to pass stimulus by January 31, 2008.
- Demanded federal reform of financial regulatory system. Otherwise New York State will act.

- Empire State Development Corp. will identify “transformational projects” in Upstate communities.
- Renew infrastructure, complete large projects such as the Peace Bridge and the Tappan Zee.
- Implement property tax cap and reform the Empire Zone program. Invest savings into biotechnology and manufacturing.

#### *Health Care*

- Partner with federal government to expand Family Health Plus program.
- Enable young people (19-29 years old) to be insured under their family plans, at the families’ own expense.
- Address epidemic of childhood obesity by implementing the Healthy Foods/Healthy Communities Initiative, a revolving loan program to increase number of healthy food markets in underserved communities, and through other activities.
- Michelle Paige Paterson will roll out exercise challenge to school children.

#### *Community*

- Mentioned recent violence in Onondaga County and other regions.
- Called for more volunteers and more funding for Regional Volunteer Centers.
- Called on federal government to reform vets’ services at home.
- Continue to fight crime through expanded Operation Impact.

#### Conclusion

Gov. Paterson closed his remarks by introducing a family from Cicero. Noting that their ancestors overcame adversity through the Depression and the economic malaise of the ’70s, he called upon the state’s leaders to help all citizens emerge from the current crisis. It is now up to the Legislature to agree to the Governor’s agenda, or to put forth their own.