

# Unshackle Upstate lobbying group upbeat on tax cap's chances

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A pro-business lobbying coalition is optimistic about progress on its top issue, a [property tax](#) cap.

Unshackle Upstate is in favor of a 2 percent property tax cap, one that doesn't allow exemptions for local costs of public employees' pensions or [health care](#), and one that doesn't tie the tax to income, known as a circuit-breaker.

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The coalition of business organizations across upstate, including the Rochester Business Alliance, on Thursday released a wish list of changes to state government.

Some local government leaders have been wary of the cap, saying that if the state imposes one and walks away, the bulk of their budgets will be eaten up by mandates and they will have no ability to raise revenue to meet those obligations.

Mandates are expenses required by the state or [federal government](#), and include Medicaid, public assistance, special education and probation.

School districts are generally opposed to the cap, saying they need mandate relief instead.

So far, Unshackle likes what it hears from [Gov. Andrew Cuomo](#), and thinks that a cap will lead to mandate relief.

"He needs a blunt aggressive tool, a property tax cap, to force the mandate relief," said Unshackle Executive Director Brian Sampson.

The group is also opposed to tying the cap to another issue, such as rent regulations, because that could lead to compromises, and a weaker cap, Sampson said.

Many of the group's other priorities are familiar: Reducing state spending, lower [taxes](#), fewer mandates and reducing state debt.

A newer priority is embracing the [ideas](#) found in the State University of New York's empowerment plan, which would allow campuses to set their own tuition.

The plan would also encourage economic development by allowing campuses to partner with local businesses, which is another priority for Unshackle.

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