

# Cuomo's speech raised hopes for an end to business as usual

Like many others, I listened to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's recent State of the State address with hopes of hearing some specific plans for upstate, particularly in regard to revitalizing our economy.

As a veteran listener to political and governmental speeches, I'm not that easily swayed. I know that talk is cheap and actions are what count. I also know that in New York, the governor's best intentions can easily be thwarted by a stubborn Legislature.

But after Cuomo was done speaking, I felt hopeful.

Why? Because I heard Gov. Cuomo put forth a plan for change, a plan that calls for real reform and for generating new ideas for bolstering our economy, creating jobs and improving efficiency for the government services delivered to all New Yorkers.

I was heartened by his call for a new state government that rewards performance, provides real-time results, puts citizens' needs ahead of those of special interest groups and insists on integrity.

What particularly resonated was Cuomo's call for a property tax cap, government consolidations and other steps needed to reduce state spending and taxes. And I welcomed his pledge to make New York more business-friendly.

In fact, I felt as if the governor had taken a page out of the Unshackle Upstate policy agenda and the Rochester Business Alliance's own New York State Survival Guide, which we circulated to all the legislators and key members of the governor's staff in Albany this week.

That "survival guide" offers a simple plan, 10 steps that must be taken if New



## ON BUSINESS

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York's economy is to survive, let alone thrive. Those steps:

- Cap the taxpayer burden.
- Stop unfunded mandates.
- End the "double standard" for public employee pay and benefits.
- Trim Medicaid's excess.
- Control the state's debt.
- Improve the competitive climate and make New York more business-friendly.
- Reform economic development.
- Encourage innovation in education.
- Reduce the size of government with consolidations.
- Lower the cost of energy.

We recognize that achieving the plan is far less simple than stating it. But hearing the governor acknowledge these same problems—and the need to find solutions now, not later—gave me hope. He spoke of New York being at a crossroads, saying we must come together to honestly confront the challenges that block the road to prosperity and growth. And he identified the same challenges we've been talking about all along—unsustainable spending and cost of state government, high taxes, a hostile business climate, underperforming public schools and a loss of population as people leave the state for better economic and job opportunities.

He expressed determination to transform

our state, and he offered concrete plans: a cap on property taxes; creation of regional economic development councils; committees that have already begun meeting to propose ways to overhaul Medicaid, provide mandate relief and revamp educational spending; a plan to transform our dysfunctional and disappointing budget process.

In essence, he called for an immediate end to business as usual, including—and especially—in state government.

These are changes in policy that the business community has long called for, with few results. We can only hope that others—particularly those in our Legislature, who are too often influenced by the special interests that contribute to their campaigns—are beginning to understand and appreciate the seriousness of the message.

In just a couple of weeks, the governor

will unveil his proposed state budget. From that we will learn much more about his priorities and his plans for addressing them.

We'll also learn whether our legislators are really ready to do the right thing—to make the tough, unpopular decisions needed to put New York back on a track toward prosperity and growth.

It's tempting to say that we can only hope. But in truth, we can and must do more. We must get engaged. We must get informed on the issues (the survival guide is available at [www.RochesterBusinessAlliance.com](http://www.RochesterBusinessAlliance.com)). And we must be prepared to remind elected officials of our expectations and of their responsibilities to us, the taxpayers they were sent to Albany to represent. New York's survival depends upon it.

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## Spell humility? Most pro stars don't even know what it means

It was mid-October, 1964. My hair was still black (honest!) when I went to see the Cleveland Browns play the Dallas Cowboys, the first regular-season NFL game I watched in person. And I was there for one reason: to see Jim Brown run the ball.

On the first play from scrimmage, Brown, who was 6-2 and about 232 pounds, went around left end for 70-plus yards. Cowboys defensive back Mel Renfro, a former track star who ran the 100-yard dash in under 10 seconds, caught up with Brown just in time to shove him out of bounds at the Dallas 1-yard line. On the next play,



## ON SPORTS

Rick Woodson

Owens' antics, that stuff's gotta stop. It's a total turnoff for us old schoolers.

The core of the mess is that too many pro athletes vastly overestimate their im-