

Sensing change, but not enough

Mar 10 2010

Filed In: [Chamber Perspective](#)

The mood in the state Capitol seems refreshingly a bit different, yet disturbingly all too the same.

1
tweet

I noticed the difference during a trip last week to talk with Legislative leadership and representatives of the governor's office about our local economic development agenda.

retweet

On the positive side, I noticed how everyone we talked with seemed to be actually listening, not just being polite. Their attention seemed to be driven by a new respect for [Unshackle Upstate](#), perhaps even a bit of what might be described as "fear" about the impact of our [Judgment Day](#) campaign and Scorecard on voter sentiment in the November elections.

That's all good, because it's important to remind our elected officials that they work for us, the taxpayers, and that they need to listen to all of us, not just select groups. As voters, we get to choose who we sent to Albany to represent us. The point of Judgment Day is that those legislators who don't understand the problems caused by New York's high taxes and stifling business regulations, and aren't willing to support and work for change, simply don't deserve – and shouldn't receive – our votes.

Also good, I heard realistic dialog about the state's financial problems. In the past, folks at the Capitol paid lip service to the ever-growing budget gap, typically downplaying it and the consequences of state government's tax-and-spend philosophy. This time, the message seems to have hit home. From Legislative leadership to the executive branch and all points in between, everyone said closing the 2010 budget gap will be difficult and painful.

Unfortunately, the talk stopped there. And that's what I find disturbing. Sure, they're kicking around cuts and the usual new taxes and one-shot revenue enhancers to get through this budget cycle.

But no one we spoke with seemed to have the interest or the willingness or feel the obligation to fight for [systemic changes](#) that would result in long-term savings for the state, such as reexamining public employee contracts, furloughing state workers (something the private sector has been doing for two years to trim costs), overhauling the Medicaid system, or holding overall state spending absolutely flat.

That simply has to change – immediately. Because the taxpayers of New York simply can't take it anymore. They, we, deserve better.

And that is what Judgment Day is all about.