

This is your chance to help clean up the Albany mess

Judgment Day is only 46 days away. Judgment Day is the name Unshackle Upstate has given to Election Day 2010, which is Nov. 2. We're calling it that because all 212 state legislators are up for re-election, along with the governor, attorney general and state comptroller. We want citizens to judge how well our elected officials have been representing us and vote accordingly that day.

This Election Day presents us with an exciting opportunity, the chance to really begin changing the way our state government operates. I say "us" because it really comes down to who is chosen to represent us—the voters—in Albany.

I firmly believe we can no longer complain about Albany's dysfunction if we, the taxpaying residents of this state, aren't willing to get engaged. We need to learn about the issues, let our elected officials know what's important to us and then vote for the people who will best represent us on those issues once they get elected.

For too long, I've heard people say, "My legislator is fine; all the other ones are the problem." But if everyone says that, nothing will change. And we know that is not acceptable. Just look at what the current system has brought us: out-of-control spending and the highest property taxes in the nation. This legislative session was a sad example of the dysfunction in Albany, with a budget that was not only four months late but also done backward, with the revenue bill passed last. It also ignored the fiscal realities of New York State by raising spending and adding a bunch of new taxes and fees.

Please know that I'm not advocating that we "throw all the bums out of office."



ON BUSINESS
Sandra Parker

Clearly, there are legislators who have done a good job and deserve our support. But in cases where they haven't, we must step up and find their replacements.

So how can we, as citizens, get engaged in the electoral process?

Rochester Business Alliance members have the opportunity to be part of our political action committee, the Committee for a Strong Economy. Later this month, we will interview candidates in the legislative races that represent our region, as well as the candidates for governor and comptroller, and members are invited to be part of that process. Our PAC will then vote to determine which candidates deserve our

endorsement, and we will be making those endorsements public through the local media and on our website, www.Rochester-BusinessAlliance.com.

Unshackle Upstate has its own political action committee, called UPAC, which is seeking contributions to support its Judgment Day campaign. It aims to affect the election by rallying voters to support candidates who will truly work to reduce state spending, lower taxes and create jobs. If you'd like more information or would like to donate, you can go to <http://upac.unshackleupstate.com>.

Unshackle, which now has more than 80 member organizations representing 70,000 employers and more than 1.5 million employees, will have its own endorsement process and make endorsements in a wider selection of state races as part of its Judgment Day campaign. The RBA is supporting those efforts, which are essential to reforming Albany, and we urge you to check out the information that Unshackle is providing and get informed on the races in your hometown.

Last month, Unshackle Upstate released

scorecards on New York's legislators, detailing how each legislator voted on key economic issues, particularly the state budget. The maximum score was 100, and legislators either earned or lost points with their votes. For instance, those who voted in favor of the state budget lost points.

Those scorecard results will be factored into the endorsement process, along with historical information on the candidates from the leadership of their local chambers of commerce. I expect those endorsements to be out soon, and Unshackle will then be engaging in an aggressive campaign to get out the word on those candidates who deserve your vote.

I'm not asking you to blindly take our word on who deserves your vote. Rather, I'm asking you to take the time to learn about the issues and study the candidates' positions and voting records so you can make an informed choice.

This election year, there are a lot of viewpoints competing for your attention. We're already being bombarded with political messaging. But don't let that throw you off your game and turn you off to the whole process. Now more than ever, we need you to be informed and engaged. And to vote.

I urge you to study the endorsements, ask questions and learn all you can about your legislators and upstate issues. Then make an informed choice on Nov. 2. This election presents our best chance to bring about the change that is so desperately needed in our state government. If we fail to engage, to do our part, then we can't blame anyone else for the results.

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Photo courtesy of New York State Executive Chamber
Gov. David Paterson addresses lawmakers. All 212 state legislators are up for re-election.