

RBA unveils 10-point policy plan to boost state economy

MATTHEW DANEMAN • STAFF WRITER • NOVEMBER 18, 2010

[Comments \(0\)](#)

[Recommend](#)

[Print this page](#)

[E-mail this article](#)

[Share](#)

Type Size **A A A**

Setting its sights on everything from a property tax cap and more charter schools to cutting Medicaid, the Rochester Business Alliance today unveiled a 10-point plan for fixing the state's moribund economy.

The business organization's "New York State Economic Survival Guide" describes the state as being "on the brink of financial disaster" after a long history of tax and spending increases.

RBA President Sandy Parker said the point of the plan is to try to influence the debate and policies in Albany in 2011, particularly as Gov.-elect Andrew Cuomo begins his administration.

"New York is hemorrhaging jobs and people and we must apply a tourniquet, not a Band Aid," Parker said.

The 10 proposals are:

--Taxpayer relief in the form of a cap on property tax increases at 2 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower; a state spending cap at 2 percent or the rate of inflation; a freeze on other taxes; and a pay freeze for state workers.

--Unfunded mandate relief in the form of a head of the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform, a report on mandates' impacts on public schools, and an annual report from the comptroller on the cost of mandates.

--Controls on state worker pay and benefits in the form of using private-sector benchmarks for salary increases and benefit sharing, a change in the state's Triborough Amendment so that pay and benefits are frozen if no contract is in place, and an end to including overtime in final salary calculations for pensions.

--Cuts to Medicaid spending in the form of setting reimbursement rates at the state rather than county level, ending the state's "spousal refusal" provision that lets a married adult qualify for Medicaid long-term care if the spouse refuses to pay, and cutting the number of personal-care service hours allowed from 30 to 17 a week.

--Debt control in the form of a freeze on debt caps and a ban on borrowing by state authorities so voters have oversight on new debt.

--Improvement of the state's business climate in the form of rejecting any new health insurance or prevailing-wage mandates that increase the cost of doing business and further restructuring the state's unemployment insurance system beyond what happened in 2007.

--Reformation of economic development in the form of centralization by putting the lieutenant governor's office in charge of economic development initiatives and creating regional councils that review and have say over economic development plans.

--Education reform in the form of elimination of the cap on the number of charter schools and passage of the SUNY Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act, which would give the SUNY system more say in setting tuition rates.

--Reduction of government in the form of cutting the number of state agencies, authorities and commissions by 20 percent.

--Lower energy costs in the form of cutting taxes on utilities and allowing natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale.

The full report is available online at www.rballiance.com.

MDANEMAN@DemocratandChronicle.com