



Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo 2016 CONSTITUENT SURVEY RESULTS

1) *Do you support the Regional Economic Development Council/Upstate Revitalization Initiative process to award economic development funds to areas of the state?*

Yes – 69.5%

No – 12.8%

Undecided – 15.2%

As you know, the Southern Tier region has done very well since the inception of the Regional Economic Development Councils, being named a top performer three out of four years and receiving one of the three \$500 million Upstate Revitalization Initiative awards this past fall. This reflects the successful collaboration our eight-county region has undertaken. We've tried to capitalize on our strengths to create plans to boost the economy. Given the struggles we have faced following the recession, it's important that we work together using available state resources to develop a sustainable economic plan. The recently passed budget includes funding for a sixth round of REDC awards.

2) *Do you support incrementally raising the minimum wage for all workers, to be fully phased-in to \$15/hr by 2021 in Upstate?*

Yes – 50.1%

No – 39.8%

Undecided – 8.8%

This was the most divisive issue during our recent budget negotiations. Currently, 25,000 residents in the Southern Tier are earning a minimum wage. In fact, half of the \$26 billion spent annually on public assistance in New York State goes to the working poor. The Legislature recognized that hardworking New Yorkers deserved an increase in the minimum wage; we also recognized that \$15 could put Upstate small businesses, farmers, and non-profits at a real disadvantage. Upstate majority members, along with our colleagues in the State Senate, agreed to a compromise, a slowly phased-in increase which will ultimately raise the minimum wage to \$12.50 in Upstate by 2021. This plan also comes with a 'safety valve' that allows for the increase to be stopped if the economy should decline.

3) *The Assembly encouraged the recent changes to Common Core and state testing. Do you think New York is headed in the right direction concerning these changes?*

Yes – 38.4%

No – 24.2%

Undecided – 33.2%

Reforming the Common Core Curriculum was a top priority of mine after the terrible way the new standards were rolled out. Responding to criticism and an unprecedented opt-out movement, the Governor convened a Common Core Task Force. The task force, along with the New York State Education Department (SED), recently announced a series of changes to Common Core and state testing. The changes include: new test vendor, untimed testing, decrease in the number of test questions, decrease in the number of tests administered, moratorium on test scores being used for teacher evaluations, and increased participation from educators in exam development. SED will also begin reviewing the teacher evaluation system and look to make additional changes to the Common Core curriculum.

4) *Do you support giving a tax credit worth up to 75% of a donation (capped at \$1 million) for those who donate to private schools?*

Yes – 27.7%

No – 57.9%

Undecided – 12.7%

This tax credit was not included in the final budget. Many concerns remained about how the proposal was structured. While benefits for middle class families are appealing, the large cap on the donation had many legislators worried that wealthy donors would benefit the most from the tax credit. While the primary focus of the Assembly continues to be on our public schools, we did add significant resources in the budget for

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New York's parochial schools as well. The final budget included an increase of \$70.5 million for non-public schools over the next two years. This is on top of the \$125 million that private schools, like Seton Catholic Central, will receive next school year as part of the 2015-16 State Budget.

- 5) ***Do you support capping the growth of property taxes at two percent each year? Currently, the cap is two percent OR equal to the rate of inflation, whichever is less (this year that cap is less than one percent for municipalities and school districts).***

Yes – 56.2%

No – 27.9%

Undecided – 13.5%

The state's tax cap has helped keep spending in check at all levels of government, saving taxpayers money in the process. However, two percent is not always two percent; each year the cap is either two percent or equal to the rate of inflation, whichever is less. This year, the cap is significantly less than one percent locally; in fact some school districts have a negative tax cap. Due to this structure, it has been increasingly difficult for municipalities and school districts to maintain the level of service expected from constituents. Changing the cap to reflect a true 2% would not be supported by the Governor, which is why we are trying to amend it to reflect specific exemptions that would provide some relief.

- 6) ***Do you support providing a tax cut for middle-class families by increasing the tax rate for those earning more than \$5 million per year?***

Yes – 77.7%

No – 15.1%

Undecided – 5.7%

The State Assembly released a tax plan in February that set three new tax rates for those making in excess of \$1 million, \$5 million, and \$10 million annually. This plan was projected to generate \$1.7 billion a year, which would have allowed a decrease in the tax rate for all New Yorkers making less than a million dollars per year. Unfortunately, our other partners in state government called this plan a 'non-starter.'

The final budget did however include a small tax cut for middle class families. The cuts would incrementally reduce middle-class tax rates for single filers earning between \$13,000 and \$200,000, heads of households earning between \$19,500 and \$250,000, and married couples earning between \$26,000 and \$300,000. Tax rates for these ranges would decrease from the current 5.9 percent, 6.45 percent and 6.65 percent to 5.5 percent, 5.5 percent and 6.0 percent respectively, over eight years.

- 7) ***Do you support the expansion of ride sharing services such as Uber and Lyft to Upstate New York?***

Yes – 50.5%

No – 20%

Undecided – 27.6%

There has been a great deal of interest in expanding ride sharing services to Upstate. Currently these services, which allow users to request a ride via their smart phone at rates usually much lower than a traditional taxi, are only available in places like New York City. While this service is in demand, and many have expressed support for its expansion, there are a number of concerns over its regulation. These include insurance liability issues, background checks for drivers, and accessibility for disabled passengers. I am a sponsor of Assembly bill A.6090 would address insurance and safety concerns and effectively allow companies like Uber and Lyft to operate Upstate. This issue will likely be a priority during the remainder of our legislative session.

- 8) ***What do you think the Legislature's top priority should be in 2016?***

Many respondents to this year's survey shared similar thoughts on what the Legislature should focus on this year. As in past years, continued work to improve the local economy and lower taxes was a popular response; this year, another common theme surfaced: ethics. The Assembly has worked for years to pass bills that limit legislators' outside income, close the LLC Loophole, increase transparency on lobbyists, and reform campaign finance laws. We will continue working on these along with stripping convicted lawmakers of their pensions. Real reform will require that agreements be reached with the Senate and the Governor. There is no better time than now for this to occur.