



2024 ADVOCACY AGENDA



ABOUT US

Upstate United is a non-partisan, pro-taxpayer, pro-economic growth, education and advocacy coalition made up of business and trade organizations from across Upstate New York. Our primary mission is to make Upstate

New York a more affordable place to live and a better place to do business.

As Albany becomes increasingly dominated by downstate interests, Upstate United is recognized as the

leading advocacy organization for Upstate communities and taxpayers. Our organization has consistently demonstrated an ability to raise awareness on key issues and achieve meaningful impacts on policy outcomes.

OUR BOARD



OUR MEMBERS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly 20 years ago, Upstate United was formed upon the belief that we want our economy moving, not our people. In 2024, our agenda outline items that we believe continue with our mission and, ultimately, strengthen our state. It's not too late to go back to the basics and prioritize responsible spending and common-sense proposals that benefit New Yorkers, as opposed to further burdening those on the brink of packing their bags for more affordable places to live.

This year's agenda focuses on pro-taxpayer and pro-economic growth policies, including items such as no new taxes, infrastructure, energy reliability and affordability, enhancing healthcare options, reinvigorating our communities with immigrants, and more.

Being ranked #1 for overall tax burden as well as population decline is not by coincidence. Albany leadership must do their part to improve opportunity for success statewide, but particularly in Upstate communities. The cost of living plays a large role in the continued Empire State Exodus. We must make our state more affordable not only to correct significant population decline but also so local businesses and key industries can thrive.

NO NEW TAXES

New York State has the highest tax burden in the country. As we head into another difficult financial year, Albany leaders should practice responsible spending.

In preparing for the 2024-25 fiscal plan, the Governor has cited that she does not want to increase taxes or depend on federal aid to close the projected \$4.3 billion budget gap.

We fully support this and encourage her to hold the line against any new taxes, including “revenue raisers” that would impact New Yorkers and business owners.

**80%
OF NEW
YORKERS
WANT A MORE
AFFORDABLE
PLACE TO LIVE,
WE AGREE!**

Source: Siena Poll, September 2023

NEW YORK RANKS...

1st Total Tax Burden (12.47%)

5th Property Tax Burden (4.36%)

1st Individual Income Tax Burden (4.72%)

24th Total Sales & Excise Tax Burden (3.39%)

Source: WalletHub, March 2023

INVEST IN UPSTATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Upstate United supports increased investments in Upstate transportation infrastructure. The Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) has reported that in this last year, 10 of 11 NYSDOT regions saw a decline in their bridge conditions. Additionally, over the past 5 years, nearly 2,000 miles of roadway deteriorated.

The federal passage of the

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allowed the Governor to enact a historic \$32.8 billion five-year New York State Department of Transportation Capital Program to help rebuild our state’s crumbling roads and bridges. However, due to record inflation, increased costs on construction materials, and supply chain shortages, a large portion of the NYSDOT Capital Program

spending has been consumed by inflation. To prevent any further project delays or cancellations, Upstate United is joining a wide range of stakeholders from various industries statewide in calling for \$400 million to be allocated for NYSDOT capital needs in the 2024-25 budget. We must prioritize the safety of all who travel our state’s roadways.

REDUCE THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION IN NY

Upstate United believes that New York must reduce the cost of construction, which can be accomplished by eliminating the state’s continued use of project labor agreements and stopping the expansion of prevailing wage to private work.

ENERGY RELIABILITY & AFFORDABILITY

Upstate United has always been a staunch advocate for keeping energy costs low for New York ratepayers and commercial use.

This past year, Upstate United led the charge of holding stakeholders and elected officials accountable when it comes to a realistic price tag and timeline of the ambitious climate goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

The Public Service Commission

(PSC) and the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) have set the bar for how to mitigate the unintended consequences of poorly constructed policies. The PSC took action to protect ratepayers and New Yorkers writ large by defending the bidding process in place to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent appropriately. Additionally, NYISO continues to monitor and report on the grid's rapid change of pace under the CLCPA. However, the PSC should not have to be

the de facto taxing authority for the CLCPA, nor should NYISO be forced to take unprecedented actions to protect the grid.

This year we ask that our legislative leaders acknowledge the countless warning signs before them and for the sake of the grid reliability and quality of life for New Yorkers, change course to a more affordable and realistic approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

LEAVE UTILITY OPERATIONS TO THE EXPERTS

Upstate United supports maintaining the responsible expertise of current energy and service providers in New York State to ensure the affordability, security, and sustainability of our power grid.



“OUR LATEST REPORT DEMONSTRATES THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE OF THE NYISO’S IN-DEPTH PLANNING PROCESS AND THE NEED TO CLOSELY MONITOR THE RAPIDLY CHANGING ELECTRIC GRID. IN THIS COMPREHENSIVE RELIABILITY PLAN (CRP), WE HIGHLIGHT SEVERAL RISK FACTORS THAT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT SYSTEM RELIABILITY IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS AHEAD.”

*ZACH SMITH, NYISO VICE PRESIDENT, SYSTEM AND RESOURCE PLANNING.
NOVEMBER 2023*

REINVIGORATE OUR COMMUNITIES WITH IMMIGRANTS

Upstate United has kept a close eye on the recent influx of asylees and immigrants arriving in New York City, and those who have ultimately traveled into Upstate communities. Early on, we called to expedite the process in which these individuals were able to work so that they could obtain gainful employment. Reducing barriers set by Federal law would have been mutually beneficial to

employers and asylum seekers alike.

We know there is a lot of work to be done around this issue, which is why Upstate United joined the Ellis Island Initiative.

The coalition aims to bring together business, faith-based, and civic organizations from across the state to transform the state's approach to

integrating migrant families into our communities. Now more than ever, it is vital that we do all that we can to support the growth and revitalization of local economies throughout Upstate and if handled correctly, the arrival of thousands of new Americans can generate economic growth in our cities, suburbs, and rural communities.

REVITALIZE THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

Upstate United supports the growth of the state's financial services industry, which is a critical aspect of the NYS economy. According to a recent report from the Business Council of New York State (BCNYS), the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA) and the New York Bankers Association (NYBA) titled *The State of the Finance Industry and Its Impact in New York* the finance and insurance industry on New York's economy equates to an industry employment multiplier of 3.66. This means for every one job created in the finance sector, another 2.66 jobs are created elsewhere in the economy on average. The finance sector also contributes 16% to the state's gross

domestic product (GDP), the number one GDP creator at \$327 billion in value added to the economy. The report concludes that "the economic health of New York is heavily dependent on the performance of the finance and insurance industry."

Upstate United urges Albany to explore avenues to bolster New York's banking, insurance, and financial services sectors and support policies that will not jeopardize their integral necessity to our economy.

**"POLICY MAKERS
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AN ATTRACTIVE,
AFFORDABLE PLACE TO
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SO WILL HELP MAINTAIN
THE STATE'S LARGEST
REVEUE SOURCE TO
ENSURE VITAL SERVICES
CONTINUE IN ORDER TO
PROVIDE A HIGH QUALITY
OF LIFE FOR ALL NEW
YORKERS"**

**NYS COMPTROLLER
THOMAS DINAPOLI
DECEMBER 2023**

IMPROVE DOING BUSINESS IN NYS

In July of 2023, CNBC released an annual study ranking America's Top States for Business using 86 different metrics in 10 key categories of competitiveness. While perhaps not a surprise, it's no less disturbing that New York ranked 46 out of 50 in categories of workforce, business friendliness, and cost of living. As New Yorkers and business owners head to more

affordable states, the pool of skilled workers shrinks. We must do better to incentivize, attract and retain workers to keep businesses and industries viable.

Upstate United believes that alleviating burdensome mandates on business owners is long overdue. As a state, we must be more diligent about the unintended consequences

of poorly constructed policies impacting business owners. In the coming legislative session we ask our state leaders to help improve the opportunity for success for our business owners by eliminating COVID-19 sick leave pay and reforming Unemployment Insurance, and worker's compensation.



**NEW YORK RANKS
46 OUT OF ALL 50 STATES**

Source: CNBC's annual studying ranking Top States for Business

ENHANCE HEALTHCARE OPTIONS FOR NEW YORKERS

Upstate United supports efforts to improve our existing healthcare system by enacting legislation that would enhance the use of technology, improving patient experience, while reducing costs to individuals, employers, and labor unions. We continue to oppose new costly mandates on private insurance, the cost of which is borne by the consumer. With 95% of New Yorkers currently insured, the goal of universal coverage is possible without the implementation of proposed initiatives that would eliminate jobs and add hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxes.



**"LET'S MAKE SURE
WE INSURE THE
REMAINING 5%"**

- JUSTIN WILCOX, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
UPSTATE UNITED

HOUSING

New York's various regions are all in need of enhanced state support for the creation of affordable housing, especially for middle-income people and families. But our upstate regions are very diverse, from metro areas to the Adirondacks, and require different approaches to be effective. There must be a range of new and enhanced support strategies applied differently in each region.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Upstate United strongly believes that residents and business owners who call Upstate New York home, deserve to feel safe and secure in their communities. We have and always will stand behind policies that protect New Yorkers and their families.

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Upstate United believes that one size does not fit all when it comes to preparing for the working world. Now more than ever it is important to bridge the gap between employers and a skilled workforce. We believe that adequate state funding and flexibility for community colleges, including modernization of funding formulas to duly value other than FTE enrollments, will help to achieve this.

WE CONTINUE TO OPPOSE THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS THAT HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED BY THE LEGISLATURE:

- HEAT ACT - A.4592-A/S.2016-A
- EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) - A.5322-A/S.4642-A
- DATA PRIVACY- S.365-B & A.3593 & A.7423-A (NO SAME AS)
- EMPLOYEE LIEN - A.46-A/S.1977-A



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