



2025
**ADVOCACY
AGENDA**

ABOUT US

Upstate United is a non-partisan, pro-taxpayer, pro-economic growth, and pro-Upstate education and advocacy coalition comprised of business and trade organizations across Upstate New York.

Two decades ago, we were formed upon the belief that we want our economy moving, not our people. Twenty years later, we must go back to the basics and prioritize responsible spending and common-sense proposals that benefit New Yorkers instead of further burdening those on the brink of packing their bags and businesses for a more affordable place to live.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our mission has always been to advocate for fiscally responsible policies that support a vibrant upstate economy. Over the past several years, the policies coming out of Albany have hindered the existence and growth of Upstate's economic drivers, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and local businesses.

We can encourage economic growth and sustainable communities throughout Upstate New York through controlled spending, reduced taxes, and regulatory reforms.

The 2025 Advocacy Agenda again includes several pro-taxpayer and pro-economic growth policies, with one overarching theme that connects them all in one way or another: Affordability. **Simply put**, we cannot be a strong and competitive state without taking the necessary steps to make doing business, daily life, housing, healthcare, and energy more affordable.



MAKING NEW YORK STATE MORE AFFORDABLE

In a December 2024 Siena Poll, more than two-thirds of voters - across party lines - indicated that cost of living was a top priority for the 2025 legislative session. We absolutely agree. New York State's vitality depends on smart spending and common-sense measures that keep residents and businesses here.

It is no surprise that affordability is the buzzword of the year for the Governor, Legislative leaders, rank-and-file legislators, and residents alike. However, acknowledging the issue is only step one. Taking action is step two. For New York to become more affordable, Albany leaders must halt looming policies with

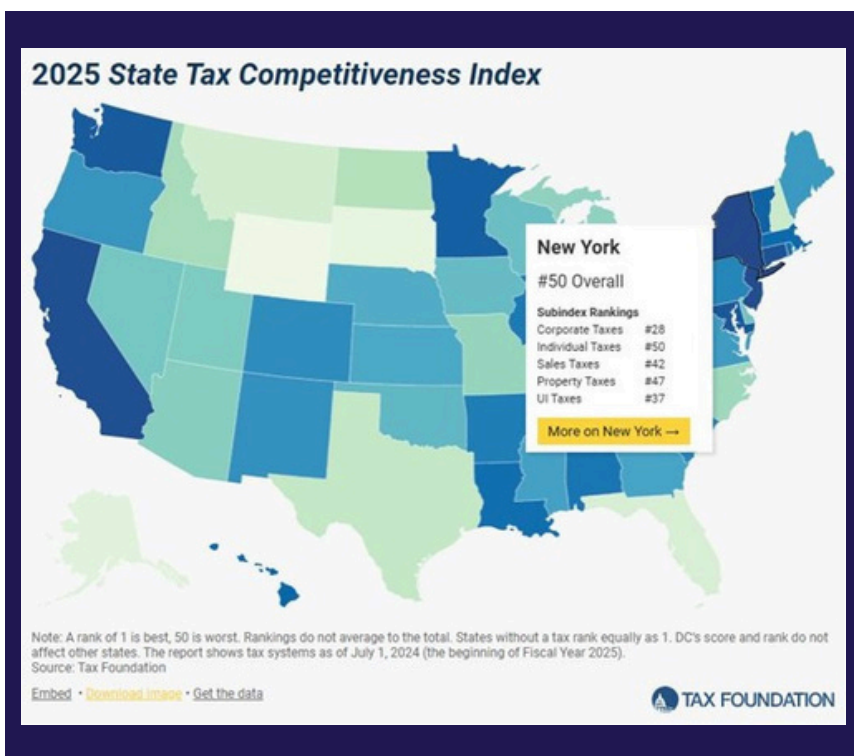
unknown price tags, reject new taxes, and prevent further costly proposals from crossing the finish line.

2/3

OF NY VOTERS WANT THE COST OF LIVING TO BE A TOP PRIORITY IN 2025

Source: Siena Poll, Dec. 2024

IMPROVING TAXATION & POPULATION IN THE EMPIRE STATE



While New York State is leading the country in population loss and is projected to lose as many as 2 million residents in the next twenty-five years, the Tax Foundation has also ranked New York dead last in its 2025 State Tax Competitive Index. On their own, each of these factors is disconcerting and worrisome. When combined, they are beyond alarming. New York cannot be competitive if we continue to drive up costs and drive out residents.

Rather than addressing New York’s nation-leading population decline or adjusting high rates and burdensome tax structures, policymakers continue to champion costly measures that make New York less affordable and, ultimately, less competitive. If leaders want to improve our competitiveness and ability to attract jobs and people, they must prioritize affordability and enact broad base tax relief to advance the economic success of our state.

ENERGY

In 2024, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) marked the fifth year since its implementation with mixed reviews and major concerns as to whether or not it can achieve its required milestones in an affordable and reliable way. Unsurprisingly, leaders of the New York State Department of Public Service, NYSERDA, and the New York State Comptroller issued reports this summer citing their respective concerns, namely, if it is realistic to attain mandated renewable goals transparently.



REPORT PROJECTS
13% POPULATION DROP IN NEW YORK STATE OVER THE NEXT 25 YEARS.

Source: Cornell University, November 2024

While this information was long overdue, we agree that pushing costly mandates that risk our energy grid's reliability is not prudent. We will continue to advocate against items, such as Cap-and-Invest, EPR, the New York HEAT Act that further burden New York taxpayers under the guise of prioritizing the environment while also calling for reform to misguided policies like the Climate Act Superfund, Advanced Clean Trucking Rule and others.

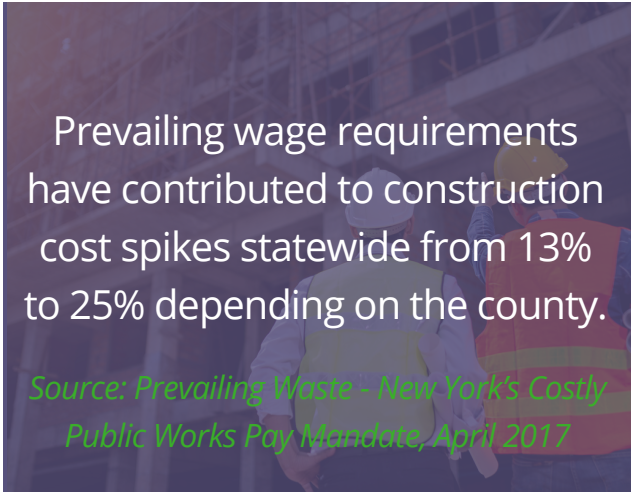


“If we want to keep the lights on, attract more economic development projects, and protect our people, Albany must reconsider its energy policies now,” *Executive Director of Upstate United, Justin Wilcox responds to The New York Independent System Operator’s 2024 Power Trends.*

Enhancing Energy Transmission to Support and Sustain Development Opportunities

Members of Upstate United represent many businesses and trade groups throughout Upstate regions. In recent years, it has become clear that New York State must enhance energy transmission in an effective way that helps communities statewide support new development and maintain current business and industry growth.

REDUCE THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION



Prevailing wage requirements have contributed to construction cost spikes statewide from 13% to 25% depending on the county.

Source: Prevailing Wage - New York's Costly Public Works Pay Mandate, April 2017

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, reforming prevailing wage laws to reflect local wages, making staging a construction accident a felony, and repealing the Scaffold Law once and for all.

STRENGTHENING NY WORKFORCE & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Upstate United strongly believes that we must strengthen New York's workforce and economic development opportunities. Whether an innovation hub, local business, or coveted Upstate industry, we must roll back restrictive red tape that supports retention and growth while also affording employment opportunities to those in the community.



67%

of upstate New York CEOs say business conditions are getting worse.

Source: 17th annual Upstate New York Business Leader Survey from Siena College Research Institute, March 2024.

In the post-pandemic era, employers continue to struggle to find qualified employees, while too many people in Upstate remain underemployed. New York State should direct workforce development funds to qualified regional chambers of commerce and other employer-led organizations that are better aligned with the needs of regional labor markets.

By engaging and empowering private sector employers, New York's workforce development efforts will be more effective, Upstate employers will benefit, and more Upstate residents will be secure in careers paying higher wages. Concurrently, state leaders should strengthen the pipeline of those being trained in high-demand trades and employment by enhancing support and funding for community colleges and BOCES.

Support the New York/Canada Corridor

Upstate enjoys a unique cross-border market with hundreds of billions of dollars in economic activity annually. Now more than ever we encourage our leaders to advocate for cross-border commerce and investment, support key front-line organizations in their cross-border related endeavors and reject proposals that would inadvertently damage New York/Canada commercial relations.

"Albany and Washington need to ensure that the businesses they attract aren't later chased away by excessive regulations and anti-growth, anti-tech populist politicians," *said Executive Director of Upstate United, Justin Wilcox - July 2024.*



Child Care

We believe that identifying ways to increase access to affordable child care is critical as families throughout New York State and the nation struggle to strike a balance in finding consistent child care while maintaining employment.

ENHANCING HEALTHCARE CHOICES 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, small businesses, and labor unions. We continue to oppose new costly mandates on private insurance, the cost of which is borne by the consumer. With only 5% of New Yorkers currently uninsured, we believe that universal coverage is possible without implementing policy that would eliminate jobs and add hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxes.

Small businesses face an increasing affordability crisis in providing health insurance for their employees. 94% of small and local employers find it challenging for their business to offer and pay for employer-sponsored health insurance. As the cost of healthcare has continued to dramatically outpace inflation, we support a package of rational reforms to New York State law that would remove unnecessary costs in healthcare, reduce the healthcare tax burden on small businesses and improve patient care.



HOUSING

Across New York State, residents continue to face a housing crisis. We believe that state leaders must approach this issue with a regional lens by working with local leaders to create and advance policies that grow the availability of housing supplies affordable to all New Yorkers including working people and their families. This must include a variety of flexible approaches suitable to different needs and circumstances in different communities and regions.

REVITALIZING FINANCIAL SECTOR GROWTH

While New York remains the world's financial hub, Upstate United believes that the significant growth in Dallas' financial sector should certainly give our representatives pause on the changes happening throughout the industry and what they mean for our state's overall economic well-being. The top reasons for this significant movement across these finance-related industries are quite simple: lower taxes and lower cost of housing. New York is chronically the most expensive place to live and do business, putting us at a significant disadvantage when it comes to competing with more affordable and welcoming states.

*In 2023, Bloomberg News calculated that **158 companies managing \$993 billion** in assets moved out of New York State to the sunbelt over the course of recent years. Roughly in that same time, **Wells Fargo & Co., Bank of America and Goldman Sachs**, three of Wall Street's largest financial firms have broken ground throughout Northern Texas.*



LEGISLATIVE ITEMS OF SUPPORT:

- ✓ Making Staging Construction Accident a Felony
- ✓ Consumer Litigation Funding Act
- ✓ Pay Frequency Law

LEGISLATIVE ITEMS OF OPPOSITION:

- ✗ Extended Producer Responsibility
- ✗ Expanded Bottle Bill
- ✗ New York HEAT Act
- ✗ New York Health Act
- ✗ Prevailing Wage on Custom Prefab Work
- ✗ Prevailing Wage on Brownfields

