

NOTES FOR CHANGE: March 15, 2019 Newsletter

“Good Fortune Obligates”

Editorial by Richard S. Gilbert, President, IINYS

Interfaith Impact urges creating the 2019-2020 state budget as a moral document. Budgets reflect the values of the community that is the Empire State. Funding priorities should be public education, health care for all, support for those in need and rebuilding our state’s crumbling infrastructure. We support the New Hope Budget for New York, which seeks to apply moral values to budgetary reality. Go to <http://fiscalspolicy.org/11737-2>.

A budget is a reflection of community values. Taxes are the price we pay to sustain those values. How is it that we live in a state with multiple millionaires and billionaires and yet lack adequate health care, public education and social services for many? New York can afford to fund a generous and moral budget. To do this we need a tax structure reflective of income level. It is time to bring our budget in line with our values. Inequality is not a New York state value. Yet we are the most unequal state in the union in terms of income. The top 1 percent earned 45 times more than the bottom 99 percent in 2016. Income share of the top 1% went from 12% in 1980 to 32.4% in 2015. We must not allow this to continue. Shared sacrifice is a value.

I would like to issue a moral challenge to those millionaires, multi-millionaires and billionaires who have made their fortune in New York State which they excoriate for excessive taxation and a bad business climate. Yet they became rich here. They should remember that the roads that transport their goods to market, the schools that educate their workers, the infrastructure in which their business thrives, were paid for by the taxpayers – all of us. They could not have done this alone. I call for their patriotism and their compassion to be seen in their willingness to make this contribution to the common good.

But don’t the rich already share a heavy burden in taxation? While the rich do provide a large share of state income, they still pay a smaller share of their income than other tax groups. In New York State the lowest 20% in income pays 11.4% of their income in state and local taxes, while the top 1% pays 11.3%. According to one measure New York has one of the most unfair state and local tax system in the country. See <https://itep.org/>.

Taxes are the price we pay for civilization. They should be founded on the ability to pay, which is based on a “good fortune obligates” ethic. Wealthy taxpayers have already received a generous tax cut from the federal government, as have their businesses. In this context, their complaints about their state tax rate ring hollow. Therefore, we support continuation of the "millionaire's tax" and other progressive tax reforms. In a time of political and economic uncertainty, a moral budget would be a welcome sign of justice and hope.

What is a “fair” tax rate? Of all the ethical rationales for taxation, the best is taxation based on the ability to pay. What proposals are on the table? While some merely wish to extend the “millionaires tax” (which expires at the end of 2019), a more robust proposal would add new rates at the \$5 million, \$10 million and \$100 million income level, bringing in over \$3 billion. **Current tax rates are below with proposed changes in bold type.**

The fact that New York is the most unequal state in terms of income is not a source of pride. It is time New York becomes the most progressive state in the union by providing the kind of health care, public education and social welfare of which we can be proud. As Albert Schweitzer put it in a powerful ethical maxim: “Good fortune obligates.” The editor awaits a better moral maxim to justify tax policy in the Empire State.

Op-ed "Four Ways to Make New York Taxes Much More Fair" Michael Kink and James Parrott
<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-four-ways-to-make-new-york-taxes-much-more-fair-20190311-story.html>

Taxation: New York State tax rates for 2018; proposed rates in bold):

Income Tax Bracket (single)	Income Tax Bracket (couple)	Marginal Tax Rate
\$0+	\$0+	4.00%
\$8,500+	\$17,150+	4.505
\$11,700+	\$23,600+	5.25%
\$13,900+	\$27,900+	5.90%
\$21,400+	\$43,000+	6.45%
\$80,650+	\$161,550+	6.65%
\$215,400+	\$323,200+	6.85%
\$1,077,550+	\$2,155,350+	8.82%
\$5,000,000+		9.32%
10,000,000+		9.82%
\$100,000,000+		10.32%

ASSEMBLY ONE-HOUSE BUDGET revenue bill is A. 2009-B

<https://nyassembly.gov/2019budget/?sec=assembly>

ASSEMBLY ONE-HOUSE REVENUE BILL includes the Ultra millionaires Tax, the Pied-A-Terre Tax and the Carried Interest Fairness Fee <https://twitter.com/mkink/status/1105442277529452544>

LET NEW YORK VOTE UPDATED **Peggy Sherman, IINYS Board Member**

Although early voting is signed into law, there is more to do to make voting in New York accessible, fair and secure! Implementation of early voting is beginning right now. The Let NY Vote coalition is calling for at least \$25 million in the State budget to help localities with the start-up costs for nine days of early voting, beginning this fall.

Electronic poll books are proposed to replace paper books and facilitate election administration and early voting. E-pollbooks would be authorized by legislation proposed with Governor Cuomo's budget, as well as by S508A/ A2070A, a bill that has already passed the Senate.

Automatic voter registration at DMV and other state agencies has also been proposed as part of the Governor's budget. AVR has been proven to improve voter participation.

The Voter Friendly Ballot Act (S2300A / A26782A) would provide more readable, well-designed ballots. This measure has passed both houses and now only needs the Governor's signature.

Although a 2018 Executive Order established a process to restore the right to vote for New Yorkers on parole, the Let New York Vote coalition is calling for automatic restoration of this right for all New Yorkers who are on parole (S1931 / A4987).

Finally, New York has the most restrictive deadline for changing party affiliation of all the states. Legislation is needed to change that date to be closer to the primary date, to allow people to make informed decisions about their voting.

With the Senate and Assembly about to release their budget resolutions and budget passage due by April 1, this is a critical time for advocacy. Go to <https://letnyvote.org/take-action> to send an email, make a call or write a postcard in support of these measures to update and overhaul the way New Yorkers vote.



Interfaith IMPACT of New York State

A More Progressive New York

**IINYS ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE
ADVOCACY DAY**

Monday, May 6, 2019

9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Legislative Office Building
Empire State Plaza, Albany NY

THE ACTION AGENDA

- 1) A big THANK YOU to both houses for passing the Reproductive Health Act, GENDA, and Voting Reforms**
- 2) Support Green Energy and a Constitutional Amendment Giving Us All a Right to Clean Air and Water and a Healthful Environment**
- 3) Reforms for Democracy and Justice**

Doors open at 9:30, program starts at 10:00. After an introduction to the issues and brief remarks by issue experts, we will break up into small groups, each facilitated by an experienced advocate, and meet with elected representatives, selected committee chairs, committee staff and program and counsel staff.

Look for our schedule of pre-advocacy day webinars on our website, <http://iinys.org>, and in your email.

When you arrive, you will get a final schedule and folder of materials. Registration is free, but please let us know you're coming so we can organize teams. **To register, email your name and contact information to info@iinys.org.**



Advocacy Day 2018

SAMPLE LETTER TO GOVERNOR CUOMO RE. ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

John Keevert, IINYS Treasurer

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
NYS Capitol Bldg. Albany, NY 12224
Dear Governor Cuomo:

I strongly support the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act (CCPA) and ask you to support its prompt implementation, but with a more aggressive timeline. This act will support Good Jobs that are Green Jobs. The New York State Climate and Community Protection Act (A03876/S2992) is a well- thought-out approach to put New York State in a climate leadership position. This legislation cuts greenhouse gas pollution from all sectors of the economy, protects communities and workers on the front lines of climate change, ensures that Jobs in the new energy economy conform with fair labor standards, and requires all state government decisions to align with climate and equity policies. The CCPA requires that resources are equitably reinvested in disadvantaged communities. It establishes a schedule for greenhouse gas reduction and sets up the committees responsible for implementing that schedule. Unfortunately, the bill was formulated several years back, and in the meantime, global warming has accelerated at a much more rapid pace than was feared, so the timelines for response must be significantly tightened.

One model is the New York Off Fossil Fuels Act (A03565) which has a more aggressive schedule that calls for a one hundred percent clean energy system by two thousand thirty, with net zero greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this, the Act requires the discontinuance of investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and establishes a goal that 100% new vehicles should be zero emission by 2030. It is significant that it also engages our state's farmers as part of the solution. The science shows us that soil can serve as a huge warehouse to pull carbon out of the atmosphere and sequester it in the ground when agriculture is practiced regeneratively. The latest report

from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows that regenerative agriculture can give us a huge assist in hitting our necessary benchmarks and climate goals.

I am proud that New York State was a leader in banning fracking and now ask that we assume a leadership position in responding to climate change by passing a comprehensive bill like Climate and Community Protection Act, with suitably advanced schedules for shifting to renewable power and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Our children's future depends on it. To assure implementation, there must be funding in this year's budget. Sincerely,

CRIMINAL JUSTICE CONCERNS

Robert Herman, Esq, IINYS Board Member

Interfaith Impact of NY is active with respect to our criminal justice system; monitoring, advocating for legislation and partnering with and supporting other organizations working in this area.

Solitary Confinement and its misuse and abuse - We have supported the work of the Campaign for Alternatives to Solitary Confinement - For more detailed information see www.nycaic.org . You can also get on their email list. See also #HALT Solitary Confinement. In October 2017 NY State set new rules for solitary confinement in local jails. Much remains to be done. There needs to be a far greater understanding of the mental health effects and potential cruelty related to solitary confinement.

1. **Cash Bail**- whether it should be used at all, and if used, that it not be abused. On August 20, 2018 California abolished cash bail and now uses the standards for pretrial release of risk to public safety and likelihood of not appearing in court. If the use of bail were to continue can the process be satisfactorily reformed? The NY Civil Liberties Union is active in this area. See www.nyclu.org .
2. **"Raise the Age"** - On April 10, 2017, **New York** Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed into **law** the **"Raise the Age"** legislation that extends the **age** of criminal responsibility to 18 years of **age**. By October 2019, **New York** will no longer automatically prosecute 16- and 17-year-olds as adults.

LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR AND INTERFAITH IMPACT DATES TO NOTE

Legislative Session ends June 19 – <https://nyassembly.gov/leg/calendar/>

March 17 (Sunday): Rochester Chapter IINYS Annual Legislative Briefing: "God's Own Junkyard: Environmental Stewardship" – Asbury First United Methodist Church (iinys.org/events)

March 18: (Monday): Fight Poverty, Not the Poor Day of Action with the Poor People's Campaign
See the full list on the [NY PPC Facebook page](#).

April 9 (Tuesday): Climate Change Advocacy Day #NYRenews

April 9 (Tuesday): TLGBQI Advocacy Day: (<https://secure.everyaction.com/9e-VrLyGpkSqUWgflEHht5A2>)

May 6 (Monday): Advocacy Day for Interfaith Impact of New York State

WE INVITE YOU TO

- Become a member of IINYS and support it financially. To support either our 501C4 action arm, **IINYS, Inc.** or our tax deductible 501C3, **IINYS Foundation, Inc.**, go to <http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org/Donations.html>.
- Respond to our action alerts by contacting your elected officials and letting us know where they stand or if they want more information.
- Become an ambassador for IINYS in your congregation, receiving and distributing IINYS materials & encouraging congregational participation.
- Urge your minister/rabbi to address issues from the pulpit and in adult education

DONATE NOW

Interfaith Impact of NYS depends on the donation of friends and members to maintain a year-round presence in Albany. Please, consider a generous donation now.

Go to <http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org/Donations.html> or iinys.org/donate or by check. Form below.



Yes, I'll help make our shared progressive religious values heard in the New York State Legislature and Executive Chamber. I want to donate to (please check one):

Interfaith Impact of NYS, Inc. to support direct issue advocacy (501C4, not tax deductible)

Interfaith Impact of NYS Foundation, Inc. issue education and civic participation (501C3 tax deductible)

Name and title: _____

Address - Street: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____ Congregation/denomination: _____

Suggested donation: \$25, \$50, \$100, \$200, \$500, other _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (check made out to IINYS, Inc. or IINYS Foundation).

Please mail to Treasurer, Interfaith Impact of NYS, 101 Coniston Dr., Rochester, NY 14610

Interfaith Impact of NYS. P.O. Box 7163 Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12224

518-463-5652; iinys.org

Facebook: like our IINYS group (to post your concern) and page for official posts

NOTES FOR CHANGE newsletter is published the 15th of each month. Action Alerts, Background Papers and Webinars will be announced. We thank the New York State Convention of Universalists and the Gilbert Spirit Fund of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester for their support.