

# SOLVING THE BUDGET PUZZLE: SET PRIORITIES, FOLLOW THROUGH

# PRIORITIES

Shaping  
New York State  
public policy for  
people in need  
since 1872

“There’s a light at the end of the tunnel – but it appears to be an oncoming subway train.” The old chestnut sounds even less funny after the failed November special session of the New York State Legislature. Since that session was called off, New York now faces a \$12.5 billion budget deficit in the next fiscal year, equal to 22% of the state General Fund.

Albany veterans have seen their share of economic downturns and dire budget crises.

Legislative leaders angle for advantage, advocates line

*It’s time to talk about cutting non-essential programs and raising revenues.*

up to testify to the dire consequences of cuts to their program, sign trucks circle the Capitol, worried-teacher commercials run on heavy rotation. Ultimately, the messy process resolves into a balanced budget.

This crisis is similar to other recent downturns, but also different in a profound way. The current budget gap is deeper than ever before, and it is partly structural, not merely a trough in the business cycle. The financial sector, which produced 20% of New York State revenues last year, has been devastated. “The investment banking industry as we know it is over,” says Budget Director Laura Anglin.

The people of New York deserve better than gridlock. They cannot afford months of delay and petty rivalries, of key players demanding that their pro-

grams be singled out for protection, of deepening public cynicism about the ability of our elected officials to manage the state. If ever there were a time for collaboration and cooperation among all policy makers and among all sectors of our society, it is now. As Lyndon Johnson used to say, “Come, let us reason together.”

The people of New York also deserve better than to be hit with meat-cleaver cuts to essential state and local

services. While across-the-board cuts are politically safer, since

every program takes the same haircut, they do the public no favors. Some programs are simply more vital than others, and cutting vital programs at the same rate as less important programs hurts the state.

Make no mistake: balancing the budget with across-the-board cuts does not represent fiscal prudence. It would require cutting every state program by almost one-fourth and devastating services essential to all New Yorkers, especially those struggling in the weak economy. It is legitimate to worry about raising New York’s already high taxes. But some alternatives could be even worse, much worse.

There is another path. The state could employ all of its fiscal levers. That means judiciously raising some taxes, eliminating some large tax breaks,

*(continued on page 2)*

## In This Issue:

- 1 Budget
- 3 President’s Message
- 6 Step Up for Kids Rally
- 7 Children’s Cabinet
- 9 Prevention Agenda
- 10 Economic Security Cabinet

[www.scaany.org](http://www.scaany.org)

**Albany**

150 State Street, 4th Floor  
Albany, New York 12207  
voice 518-463-1896  
fax 518-463-3364

**Board of Trustees**

James W. Lytle, Esq., *Chair*  
Paul J. Kaye, M.D., *Vice Chair*

Edward McCormick,  
*Vice Chair*

Frederic J. Buse, *Treasurer*

Herbert Gordon,  
*Assistant Treasurer*

Charles Brecher, Ph.D.,  
*Secretary*

Annette Choolfaian

Annette De Lavallade

Stanley Epstein, M.D.

Cynthia B. Green, Ph.D.

Verona P. Greenland

David Harris, M.D.

Stephen A. Hochman, Esq.

Laura Jarvis

Sharon Katz, Esq.

Phyllis Lusskin

David C. Momrow

Deborah Onslow

Thomas W. Roach

Lucille Rosenbluth

Reinhold Samson

Louise Skolnik, DSW

Ronald F. Uba

Karen Schimke, *President/CEO*

©2008 Schuyler Center for  
Analysis and Advocacy

Please credit SCAA when  
copying or republishing  
material from *SCAA Reports*

*(continued from page 1)*

tapping the rainy day fund, helping local governments reduce their own property taxes, getting federal assistance, and yes, cutting state spending significantly. It's been done before, and not too long ago. In 2003, the state applied a mix of budget cuts and new taxes to close the budget gap. The economy rebounded rapidly. In 2009, the state should take a similar "all of the above" approach.

### Setting Priorities and Following Through

The most important step can be summed up in two words: set priorities. Like any CEO or director of a large organization, the leaders of New York State should agree on the state's top priorities, and then target areas that do not directly serve those priorities for heavier program cuts, higher taxes and new user fees. Here we offer our own perspective on the priorities that the state should set.

#### Three budget priorities for the State of New York

1. Protect programs that serve vulnerable New Yorkers.
2. Protect "seed corn" investments essential to the state's future prosperity.
3. Give special consideration to programs that can show evidence of successful outcomes.

Some programs are indispensable. For example, many New Yorkers (and not only poor ones) live very close to the edge of a financial cliff. If they fall off the cliff, they get hurt. Their families get hurt. And the cost to the state actually goes up over time. The state can cut child prevention programs, such as home visiting for new parents to teach parenting skills, but then we can expect a rise in child abuse cases. The state can cut home care for the elderly, but then more will be forced into expensive nursing homes. The state can

cut financial aid for low-income college students, but then fewer will attend college and get decent jobs. Is that the path we want New York to take?

Instead, the state should do whatever it takes to keep vulnerable families healthy, safe and off the street. We also need to protect our investments in the state's workforce, institutions like community colleges, adult education, summer youth employment and apprenticeship programs, which serve low-income workers and private employers who will need skilled workers when the economy recovers. A few targeted economic development incentives make sense as well. Initiatives to develop infrastructure assets in struggling communities upstate and in New York City's outer boroughs can yield hope over the next several years.

In order to save these high-priority programs in the face of a \$12.5 billion budget deficit, stakeholders need to be able to think about the budget from other perspectives than their own. That means bringing up a subject that hardly anyone outside the executive branch wants to talk about: cutting non-essential programs and raising revenues. Like other advocates, SCAA traditionally talks about the programs we think the state should expand or protect. But these are not ordinary times, and someone has to go first.

We reviewed the state budget looking for programs that could be cut without hurting the vulnerable or damaging investment in the state's future prosperity. We looked for new revenues that could be raised using the same criteria. A full list of proposals follows this article. Some proposals will be familiar to seasoned budget watchers, others less so.

Examples include:

- **Empire Zone program:** Originally created to assist low-income communities

*(continued on page 5)*

## From the President



Amid countless competing interests in Albany, SCAA serves to focus public and policy makers' attention on the state's most vulnerable people. Since the election, there are still a lot of voices contending for attention. But the one we cannot afford to ignore is a voice you'll never hear this post election season: the voice of New York's children. The following is excerpted from a *Times Union* Op-Ed, September 14, 2008.

Every public official pledges support for our kids, but a recent study by the children's advocacy group, First Focus, discovered that only one penny of every new nondefense dollar spent by the federal government over the past five years went toward children. Given today's shaky economy, our elected leaders will face even tougher spending decisions in the months to come.

But children cannot wait. We can't stop their brains and bodies from developing until we have the money to help them. They are our most vulnerable population and our most valuable resource — yet they have no voice to speak out for what they need.

But what if we asked them? What might children say?

*Please try to keep my family together:* Families face tremendous stress in these tough times. It is particularly important that we provide them with the supports they need to strengthen their families. In 2006, more than 157,000 reports were made to New York State regarding a concern that children were being abused or neglected. Investments in family supports

such as home visiting programs have proven to reduce costs associated with involvement with the child welfare system by helping to prevent child maltreatment. Helping to maintain a more stable home life for a child will result in cost savings by reducing the number of children removed from their families and placed into foster care.

*It is hard to concentrate on schoolwork when I'm sick:* Children who are sick or in pain just can't learn very well. For example, children in low-income families are 25% more likely to be diagnosed with cavities — but 80% more likely not to receive treatment for those cavities. Likewise, children with mental health and developmental issues may also struggle to get through school. Delaying the diagnosis or treatment of health, mental health or developmental conditions is not only cruel. The absence of needed care causes greater harm to the child and higher costs in the future.

*If you wait until I'm in school to help me learn, it may be too late:* Research shows 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age 5. Further, every dollar invested in early childhood education can save upward of seven future dollars — with fewer juvenile offenders in prison, fewer families on public assistance, and fewer teen pregnancies.

Policy makers — especially in this economic climate — will indeed face hard choices. But improving the lives of children is one of the soundest investments we can make. Cutting services not only hurts them, it hurts us — by producing a weaker work force and more public spending down the road.

Because children cannot make their voices heard, we must speak out for them.

Sign up for SCAA's new *Children's Policy Agenda E-newsletter* at [www.scaany.org/childrens\\_policy\\_agenda](http://www.scaany.org/childrens_policy_agenda), using the "join our mailing list" icon on SCAA's website.

**Proposals for New Savings and Revenues,  
New York State FY 2009-10**

(All revenues expressed in millions of dollars)

<b>Budget Proposal</b>	<b>New Savings &amp; Revenues</b>
<b>Education/Higher Education</b>	
Eliminate state high-tax aid to prosperous school districts	\$202
Suspend Bundy Aid program	\$44
<b>Economic Development</b>	
Eliminate Empire Zone program	\$582
<b>Health Care</b>	
Increase covered lives assessment on insurance industry	\$120*
Shift financing for public health programs and Timothy's Law assistance to insurance assessments	\$140*
Reduce unspent Graduate Medical Education funding	\$23*
Enforce tobacco tax on Indian reservation tobacco sales to non-Indian customers	\$481
<b>Human Services/ Public Safety</b>	
Close six juvenile detention centers and downsize two others	\$17*
Close unneeded prisons, expand alternatives to incarceration	\$410
Abolish sex offender program in state psychiatric hospitals, house in existing correctional facilities.	\$40
<b>Targeted Revenue Increases</b>	
Restructure STAR into an income-based "circuit-breaker" program and cut by 10%	\$347
Eliminate Middle Class STAR Rebate	\$1,227
Establish temporary progressive income tax surcharge	\$4,300
Enact Bigger Better Bottle Bill*	\$118
Raise Beer Excise Tax from .11 cents to .25 cents	\$73
<b>Economic Stabilization Fund</b>	
Tap Economic Stabilization Fund	\$1,000
<b>Total State Savings and Revenues</b>	<b>\$9,124</b>

\*Contained in Governor David R. Paterson's November 12, 2008 Special Session Budget Proposal

(continued from page 2)

in attracting new investment and jobs, the Empire Zone program has become a costly untargeted subsidy lacking any real accountability for results. Abolishing the Empire Zone program would recoup almost \$600 million in tax revenue. As the economy recovers, New York should replace the Empire Zone program with an assortment of more effective programs that integrate economic and workforce development initiatives.

- **High tax aid to high-wealth school districts:** The state's educational aid is based on a school district's educational need and the community's ability to support its schools with its property tax base. But along the way, millions have been diverted to school districts in prosperous communities as well. This is a mistake. School aid is not supposed to be a tax relief program, and many of these communities have significant fiscal resources and high graduation rates. By eliminating high-tax aid, New York could save \$200 million annually.
- **STAR:** The School Tax Relief (STAR) program has become a complex and regressive subsidy to prosperous school districts and homeowners. The recently established Middle-Class STAR Rebate should be abolished at a savings of \$1.2 billion. In addition, New York should implement the Commission on Property Tax Relief's recommendation to transform STAR into an income-based "circuit-breaker" program, while cutting overall funding by 10% at a savings of \$347 million.
- **Bundy Aid:** This program provides general operating subsidies to private colleges and universities in New York. Funding is skewed toward wealthy colleges possessing large endowments and real estate holdings. The Tuition

Assistance Program does a better job of supporting low-income students attending private colleges. Suspending Bundy Aid would save more than \$40 million annually.

- **Tobacco tax enforcement:** All cigarette sales in New York are taxed, with one big exception: cigarettes sold on or by Indian reservations. The Indian reservation loophole costs New York more than \$500 million annually. Taking the legal steps necessary to reclaim this revenue will also discourage youth from smoking and improve public health.

Some knowledgeable readers may object that our proposals are politically unrealistic. That is undoubtedly true in some cases. Our goal is simply to show that with sufficient political will, the state can avoid cutting its most vital programs to the bone. Nevertheless, our elected officials are public servants. We urge them to follow the maxim of all good public servants: support strong cases, not strong advocates.

Others may disagree with the programs we target, arguing that some of these programs serve the disadvantaged, or represent an important investment, or will yield less revenue than we claim. They might be right as well. We welcome feedback and pledge to revise any factual errors.

On the other hand, we had to pass by many deserving targets for cost savings. We see particular promise in providing local and county services on a regionwide basis, as explored recently by the Commission on Local Government. New York's many overlapping local and county government entities evolved for historical reasons, not practical ones. Regionalizing social service districts, school districts and other municipal services would save

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

hundreds of millions at the state and local levels, and improve the delivery of services as well.

The state also needs to look closely at the size and composition of its workforce, examine the utilization of contractors to perform state services, reduce accrued retirement costs by establishing a new pension tier, put capital projects on hold if they are not shovel-ready or essential for health and safety purposes, and establish revenue-raisers that reduce carbon emissions and dependence on foreign oil imports.

Each program that we target for cuts serves a constituency that deserves assistance; there are no easy savings to be had next year. Each tax and fee imposes an

additional cost on someone who will feel it; there are no painless revenue-raisers at the state's fingertips. We sympathize with every organization, company, provider and individual on our list, having seen programs we value targeted in past years. But as Martin Luther once said: "Here I stand. I can do no other."

As New York struggles through a perfect storm of budgetary havoc, it seems clear that the usual approach—defend your own program and speak no evil of others—will make hard choices harder or even impossible to make. It is time to open up a discussion about New York's top priorities and the sacrifices needed to protect them.

## Step Up for Kids Rally

September 16 was a beautiful day in Albany, and the State Capitol Steps were the perfect setting for an animated crowd of 300 who gathered to "Step Up for Kids".

After a big welcome from rally planning chair, Michelle Gross, of Prevent



*Kristin Proud, Deputy Director for State Operations; Karen Schimke, SCAA President; Christina Felix, Mental Health Youth Advocate*

Child Abuse New York, speakers stepped to the podium and called upon New Yorkers to vote in November. The speakers underscored the importance of the election to New York's children and families and urged voters to question candidates and educate them regarding their positions on children's issues.

Preschool children paraded through Capitol Park and the many teens present showed that they too are involved in the advocacy process. Enthusiastic parents, grandparents, teachers and advocates waved signs and cheered on the speakers with outbursts of the rally chant, "Vote for Kids!"

So many organizations and individuals came together to make the rally the wonderful success it was. The Horace Hagedorn Foundation and the Rauch Foundation underwrote the cost of transportation to bring children's activists to

---

Albany from Long Island, New York City, Rockland and Orange counties, Rochester and Syracuse. Dunkin Donuts and Hannaford Supermarkets donated refreshments. The rally in Albany was part of a nationwide Step Up for Kids event, coordinated by Every Child Matters. And, of course, what would a rally be without the hundreds of individuals—from tots to seniors—who filled Capitol Park! We thank all of you and congratulate you on a sensational day.

The roster of speakers included: Albany County Executive, Michael Breslin; Deputy Director for State Operations, Kristin Proud; Christina Felix, board member of Families Together New York and YouthPower; pediatric pulmonologist and Docs for Tots member, Dr. Helen Rouvelas; Principal Clifford Bird, Abram G. Lansing Elementary School in Cohoes; Leonard Ricchiuti, Jr., Executive Director of the Albany Police Athletic League and former Albany Police Sergeant; and Karen Schimke, President and CEO, SCAA.



Also impressive was the amount of media interest that the rally garnered. Press coverage began with an opinion editorial in the *Albany Times Union* on September 14, and continued with media coverage at the rally, as well as radio and television interviews throughout the week in news markets across the state. For more information and rally photos, visit the New York Children's Action Network website at: [www.scaany.org/nycan/PhotoGallery.php](http://www.scaany.org/nycan/PhotoGallery.php).

---

## Serving Children Better: The Work of the Children's Cabinet

During the 2006 Gubernatorial election campaign, then candidate Elliot Spitzer and Lieutenant Governor candidate David Paterson, staked out their strong interest in and focus on children. After the election, Governor Spitzer followed through on his campaign rhetoric by signing an Executive Order to create a Children's Cabinet in June 2007. The order noted, "The Governor recognizes that to ensure the well-being and future success and development of New York State, it is essential to provide improved services to children in the areas

of health, education, safety and general child welfare. Governmental programs must collaborate to develop and implement effective, efficient and coordinated service delivery to ensure that all of New York's children are given an equal opportunity to reach their full potential."

The mission of the Children's Cabinet is to advise and make recommendations to the Governor on the most effective policies and programs that advance the Governor's Birth to Five Agenda and other priorities, including but not limited to:



*Kristin Proud, Deputy  
Director for State Operations*

*(continued on page 8)*

---

(continued from page 7)

- implementation of universal children's health insurance;
- implementation of universal prekindergarten throughout New York State; and
- development of a legislative program focused on the Governor's Birth to Five Agenda.

The Children's Cabinet was first chaired by then Director of State Operations, Olivia Golden. The Cabinet is now chaired by Kristin Proud, Deputy Director of State Operations, New York State Executive Chamber. Vice chairs are Joe Baker, Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services and Duffy Palmer, Deputy Secretary for Education.

In August 2007, the Administration created a Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, chaired by Geoffrey Canada of the Harlem Children's Zone and Karen Schimke of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. The Advisory Board quickly organized into six workgroups, which began to deliberate on the two key areas identified by the Governor.

Kristen Proud says of the Children's Cabinet and Advisory Board, "Governor David A. Paterson has made it a priority of his administration to foster an environment in New York State in which all children have an equal opportunity to succeed. Over the past year and a half, the collaboration between the Governor's Cabinet and the Children's Advisory Board has had a meaningful impact in two key areas that were identified by the Governor as the Cabinet's initial priorities—children's health insurance coverage and early learning/Universal Prekindergarten (UPK). The cross-agency approach of the Children's Cabinet and the public/private partnership between the Cabinet and the Advisory Board have contributed to the enrollment of 43,600 additional four-year-olds and the participation of 194 addi-

tional school districts in the UPK program over the last two school years. In addition, the Children's Cabinet and Advisory Board members have worked closely with the Department of Health to ensure that children who need health insurance coverage access it through the recently expanded Child Health Plus program."

The work of the Advisory Board and its workgroups has had a productive impact on state policy and implementation in several key respects. For example:

- The Board of Regents revised state policy to allow mid-year implementation of Universal Prekindergarten, making it possible for more school districts to participate.
- The Quality Early Care and Education workgroup explored development and implementation of a Quality Rating and Improvement System. That work is well underway and the system is now called *Quality Stars New York*.
- The Local Implementation of Children's Health Insurance Enrollment Efforts workgroup examined barriers to enrollment, identified strategies for overcoming them as well as opportunities for partnerships to expand coverage.

The Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007 required that states establish or designate early childhood advisory councils. The Children's Cabinet and the Advisory Board have recently been designated to perform the functions required by this legislation. Efforts to organize how this work will be accomplished are currently underway.

Over the summer of 2008, the Cabinet, the Advisory Board and a state/advisory board working group began to address a third cross-cutting issue area: Disconnected Youth. The Cabinet accepted a recommendation that Disconnected Youth be the next area of

---

For more information on the Children's Cabinet visit their website at <http://www.ccf.state.ny.us/Initiatives/CabHome.htm>

---

investigation with a particular focus on youth who are in or leaving foster care or the juvenile justice system, and youth with incarcerated parent(s.) A workgroup will begin to review baseline data in the near future.

Karen Schimke, SCAA President notes, "Our New York Children's Action Network sought the creation of a Children's Czar or some other structure to elevate children before public policy makers. We are pleased that the Children's Cabinet was created and enthusiastic about its energy and level of effort."

### *Children's Cabinet Advisory Board Workgroup*

1. *Universal Prekindergarten Implementation*
2. *Quality Early Learning Programs*
3. *Early Learning Financing*
4. *Local Implementation of Children's Health Insurance Enrollment Efforts*
5. *Streamlining Verification of Eligibility for Public Children's Health Insurance Through Technology*
6. *Auto-enrollment*

## Toward a Healthier New York: The Prevention Agenda

In April 2008, the New York State Department of Health (DOH) launched the *Prevention Agenda for the Healthiest State*. This public health effort establishes statewide public health priorities and asks local health departments and their health care and community partners to work together to achieve these priorities.

The Prevention Agenda identifies goals to be achieved by 2010 for a number of public health priorities. Under each priority area there are specific indicators with data points to measure progress. In many areas, the indicators also track progress toward eliminating racial, ethnic and socio-economic health disparities. Priority areas are:

- Access to Quality Health Care
- Tobacco Use
- Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children
- Physical Activity and Nutrition
- Unintentional Injury
- Chronic Disease and Cancer

- Infectious Disease
- Healthy Environment
- Community Preparedness
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The Agenda calls for local health departments and hospitals to collaborate with other health care and community organizations to identify two or three local priorities from the list and work together to implement strategies to address those areas of concern. DOH will provide technical assistance on community health planning and evidence-based public health prevention. It will also track progress and evaluation on the indicators.

SCAA serves on the Ad Hoc Committee of the Public Health Council that will support the implementation of the Prevention Agenda.

For a complete Prevention Agenda with the indicators, visit the Department of Health's website at: [http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/prevention_agenda/).

---

## Collaborating to Help Working Families: The Economic Security Cabinet



Commissioner David Hansell  
NYS OTDA

The Governor's Economic Security Cabinet is not a secret, not exactly. But it is not well known either.

Few people appreciate the central role the Cabinet plays in making state government work more effectively, coordinating projects likely to impact the lives of millions of New Yorkers, especially in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

We interviewed the Cabinet's co-chairs: the Commissioner of the Department of Labor (DOL), Patricia Smith, and the Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), David Hansell. We had some basic questions: Why does there need to be such an entity as an Economic Security Cabinet? What has it achieved? What is it doing now?

With many and varied funding sources, governance structures and state/local relations, New York's government agencies have struggled to manage their portfolios and viewed interagency collaboration as a luxury. Each agency operates within its own silo, and offices within an agency typically have their own silos. As a result, agencies miss opportunities to better serve their clients, save taxpayer dollars and plan for the future.

In 2007, Governor Eliot Spitzer established the Economic Security Cabinet to "provide a new focus on the needs of working families." The Cabinet's four objectives are to: (1) reduce New York State's high cost of living; (2) establish educational and workforce development opportunities; (3) strengthen New York State's social safety net and share economic risk; and, (4) bring good jobs to New York State communities.

But what does that mean in practice? "The Cabinet decided to focus on two areas," says OTDA Commissioner Hansell: "improving coordination and increasing access to benefits because many work-

ers were not getting access; and coordinating workforce development programs, which were and still are fragmented."

The budget crisis has added urgency to the Cabinet's work. "In these tough economic times, it's unlikely we're going to have an increase in funding," says DOL Commissioner Smith. "One of the charges is that our initiatives can't cost any additional money. The Governor says, 'do more with less.'"

Of course, every governor would like his agencies to do more with less. But the Cabinet has already come through in several areas by convening six cross-agency action teams to turn the issue priorities into action items (see last page). Notable results include:

- *Regional alignment:* The Department of Labor, the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), and the State Education Department (SED) have come to an agreement on which counties belong in what regions. It is a seemingly trivial change, yet profoundly revealing of the insular world inhabited by many government agencies. Each agency analyzes trends and provides financial assistance on a regional basis. In the past, these agencies defined regions differently, which made it difficult to share data to fulfill their respective missions.

Now the three agencies are ready to work together, so they have negotiated common regional definitions. "I have information on the workforce of the Mohawk Valley, and I can provide ESDC with that information," says DOL Commissioner Patricia Smith. Obstacles to collaboration are falling as agencies make it a priority.

- *Mybenefits.ny.gov:* In August 2008, OTDA rolled out the mybenefits.gov website, which provides an easy and convenient way to find out which

work support programs an individual or family may qualify for. The programs include the Home Energy Assistance Program, the Women, Infants and Children program, Food Stamps, School Breakfast and Lunch programs, and the state Earned Income Tax Credit.

- *Career Pathways*: OTDA and DOL are collaborating on an initiative to seed career pathway programs throughout the state. Such programs connect education, training and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry, and to advance over time to higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Each rung on the ladder is designed to prepare for the next level of employment and education.<sup>1</sup>

In early 2008, the two agencies identified \$2.5 million from their respective budgets that they could pool to issue a Request for Proposals to establish ten career pathways programs, five in New York City and five in other areas. “I don’t think a collaboration of this kind has ever taken place before,” notes Commissioner Hansell.

Over the summer, agency representatives organized and attended thirteen “listening sessions” in every region of New York State. They listened as business executives, labor leaders, non-profit representatives and ordinary citizens testified about their concerns and their ideas for improving economic security in their communities. Witnesses spoke most frequently about affordable housing, skills training, health care access, transportation and job availability. “We heard a lot of

<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from Davis Jenkins and Christopher Spence, *The Career Pathways How-To Guide*, Workforce Strategy Center, October 2006.

concerns about how people were going to make ends meet, the struggles people were having,” recounts Commissioner Hansell. Despite the warm summer days, home heating costs came up regularly, especially in the North Country.

The Cabinet’s action teams are hard at work preparing recommendations on their issue areas for Governor Paterson’s consideration. Among the areas they are working on are:

- Helping employers make better use of federal tax credits.
- Developing a catalog of career pathway model programs around the state and best practice models from other states.
- Expanding capacity and use of distance learning programs for adult education and training.
- Aligning economic and educational development strategies with labor market planning.
- Developing strategies to enable low-income New Yorkers to apply jointly for Medicaid and food stamps.
- Expanding knowledge, access and use of work support benefits through marketing strategies, facilitated enrollment, employer-focused outreach, and via the Unemployment Insurance program.
- Consolidating multiple income tests across work support benefit programs.
- Aligning and simplifying resource tests for work support benefit programs.
- Strengthening the State Workforce Investment Board to play a more effective coordinating role in education and training programs.



Commissioner Patricia Smith  
NYS DOL

(continued on page 12)

(continued from page 11)

The Economic Security Cabinet has a website at: <http://economicsecurity.us/>

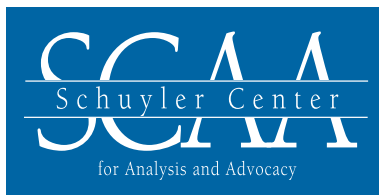
The MyBenefits website is available at: <https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/selfservice/>

In the past, agency leaders who wanted to work across agency lines have done so at their own initiative, with no particular support structure from the Executive Office. Now that support structure exists in the

form of the Economic Security Cabinet, and it holds the promise of systematizing the kind of forward-looking and integrated governance that will make the best use of taxpayer dollars in the lean years to come.

### *Economic Security Cabinet: Action Teams*

1. *Low-wage Worker Initiatives Action Team*
2. *Alignment of Labor Market Trends and Workforce Development Investments Action Team*
3. *Technology Opportunities Action Team*
4. *Outreach and Marketing Action Team*
5. *Income and Resource Requirements Action Team*
6. *Cross-Agency Issues Action Team*



**150 State Street, 4th Floor  
Albany, New York 12207**

