

CitzeNetReporter

Westchester County Association Aghast at New York State Budget.

Tuesday, March 31

by [John Bailey](#)

WPCNR WESTCHESTER COUNTY CLARION-LEDGER. From Westchester County Association. March 31, 2009: the area's leading business membership and advocacy group-today said that the proposed New York State 2009-2010 budget would further deteriorate an already fragile economy.



Bill Mooney President, Westchester County Association. September 2008 Photo, *WPCNR News Archive*

WCA President William M. Mooney, Jr., said: "Once again, it appears that New York State is prepared to pass a budget that is long on spending but short on fiscal reform. This could not happen at a worse time, given the dire condition of the economy. This budget promises to drive more businesses and residents away from Westchester. The proposed increases of more than \$7 billion in personal income taxes and other taxes, combined with the elimination of the STAR property tax rebate, will be very painful for many businesses and individuals in Westchester." He added, "The proposed increase in income tax on those making over \$250,000 is especially onerous to individuals and businesses in Westchester County and will further hamper economic development. Close to 35,000 individuals and businesses fall into this category, more than in any other county in the state outside of New York City."

Mooney noted that the WCA for nearly a decade has called for major fiscal reforms in Albany. More than two years ago, it created the Property Tax Reform Alliance and made a number of recommendations for all levels of government to help alleviate the property tax burden in Westchester, ranked among the highest in the nation. "We are especially disappointed that one of the reform initiatives we supported, the a new tier of pension benefits (Tier V) for most newly hired public employees did not make it from the Governor's proposed Executive Budget to this final version. That step alone would have saved taxpayers a cumulative total of \$48.5 billion over the next 30 years.

Instead of making the necessary structural reform and expenditure cuts to state government at a time when they are critically needed, our lawmakers have again taken a short-term band aid approach to plug the deficit instead of making substantive reforms. By announcing this budget over the weekend and just days before the legislature votes on it, Governor David Paterson, Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith and Assembly Speaker Sheldon have created a budget that lacks transparency and avoids making the difficult decisions that the state fiscal condition requires. Given what is at stake, this is unconscionable."

WCA Chairman Al DelBello noted, "New York is already viewed as one of the least-friendly business climate states in the nation. This budget will make the situation much worse." He added, the WCA will continue to press legislators to make the hard but necessary choices in the same fiscal belt-tightening ways that the private sector has been forced to do to get through the economic crisis. Without those reforms, New York State will sink into a deeper economic hole.

Two weeks ago, WCA members expressed strong dissatisfaction with the NY State Legislators representing Westchester and the region at the organization's annual breakfast. "At that time, the legislators learned that 78% of the members surveyed feel the state is not taking the necessary actions to control spending. It's time for our legislators to get the message and act," Mooney stated.

Recognizing that passage of the budget is a foregone conclusion, the WCA will nonetheless mobilize its members and the business community at large to send a petition to the legislators expressing their dissatisfaction. This petition is available on the WCA website, <http://www.westchester.org/petition.asp>