

Legislative Gazette Questionnaire

1. Central and Western New York tend to lag behind during times of economic recovery. What should the governor's office do to stimulate economic growth in these areas?

We must first recognize that the voodoo trickle-down economics of providing tax cuts to the rich and handouts to large businesses over the last thirty years has utterly failed to help the upstate economy. Yet this continues to be the principal agenda of the two major parties.

Giving more money in the form of tax cuts don't work because the rich don't invest long term in new means of production and employment. Instead, they speculate on Wall Street to rearrange ownership of existing means of production.

The decline of upstate New York has many factors. New York is among the oldest states, one of the initial colonies. Our outdated constitutional system of government has harmed upstate cities. They have lost the revenue base to sustain themselves as more affluent residents have moved to the suburbs. This was one of the reasons Sec. 54 of the state finance law providing for sharing 8% of the state's progressive income tax with local governments was created. But every year the state government exempts themselves from this law. Last year they shared only 2%. Other states more easily allow cities to expand their boundaries to reflect shifting development patterns and share property tax bases.

In addition, the infrastructure of many upstate communities is old and expensive to repair. Residents and businesses finding it easier and cheaper to relocate to newer cities that have just started to build such infrastructures. Many of these new cities in the south and west are now beginning to experience many of the infrastructure problems and costs that upstate has been facing for decades.

Upstate New York however will likely benefit from the impact of climate change and even peak oil because of our abundance of clean water. Upstate must take a more aggressive leadership role in developing a sustainable, green economy. Unfortunately, the US lags behind most of our industrial competitors in this regard. We can raise the funds needed to finance such investments by reversing thirty years of tax cuts for the rich in NY.

We need to ensure democratic control over economic development. We need to eliminate the crony capitalism system used by the IDAs and ESDC to reward campaign contributors. Rather than trying to outbid other communities in trying to relocate jobs, communities should determine what development makes most sense to them and then make the infrastructure and education investments needed to allow local businesses to grow and new businesses to be started to meet that plan. That way the jobs will stay in the community because the investment will be in local infrastructure.

Cities also need to be greened to make them more attractive places to live and raise a family. Schools need to be properly funded. We need our Farm Bill to invest in family farms, not corporate agribusiness, and to invest in strengthening rural communities.

2. Both tax caps and circuit breakers have been proposed in New York as a way to limit spiraling property taxes. However, it has been argued that neither of those measures would work without placing limits on spending. Where do you stand on these proposals and what would you do to curb increases in local property taxes.

I oppose the tax caps. They have been disastrous in other states, like California's Proposition in 1978. They schools and local government for funding. I do support circuit breakers because it targets tax relief to those who need it the most.

To deal with high property taxes:

One, the state should comply with the state law on revenue sharing with local government. Started by Gov. Rockefeller, Section 54 of the State Finance law recognized that the state government had more progressive

ways to raise revenue that local governments that only had the regressive property and sales taxes. I would increase state revenue sharing by 400% by requiring the state to meet the requirement to provide 8% of its revenues to local government.

Two. The State and federal government should pay most of the cost of running schools, instead of the local property tax.

Three, the state should pick up the county / NYC contribution to Medicaid, as is the standard for the rest of the country. Medicaid is the county's biggest cost, equal on average 45% of county property tax levies.

Four, I would also save money for the county – both in taxes and as an employer – by having New York adopt a single payer Medicare for All health care system. Single payer would control costs, which will escalate for school and other public employees without single payer and force local government to cut schools and other services if a property tax cap is imposed. The state's recent study found that such a system would save New Yorkers about \$28 billion a year by 2019 compared to the insurance mandate passed by Congress.

Five, I would target property tax relief to New Yorkers that most need it. The Star program should be reformed into an expanded property tax circuit breaker, helping low and middle-income residents rather than primarily going to the wealthy under the present system.

3. The August unemployment rate in New York was at 8.2 percent. What kind of jobs are needed in the state and how should they be created? Do you see public works projects as part of the solution to this problem and, if so, where and what types of projects would you like to see the state proceed with?

I support a guaranteed job at a living wage for every adult willing and able to work in public works and public services. Private jobs are good, but public jobs are necessary for full employment. If you can't find a job in the private sector, you should be able to go to the employment office, not the unemployment office, and get your job. The work to be done includes renewable energy, mass transit, public housing, water and sewage infrastructure, child care, public education, health care, elder care, parks, and youth programs.

A good job is the central to the American Dream. We say we believe in the Work Ethic. We say we believe that people who work ought to be able to realize the American Dream of providing a decent, self-sufficient standard of living for themselves and their dependents.

The right to a job at a living wage ought to be a personal, enforceable right. It ought to be the obligation of government to provide a public job doing socially useful work at decent pay when a private job is not available.

We also need socially useful public investments to create jobs, raise demand, create new wealth, and stimulate a sustainable economic recovery. The worst thing to do is to cut state spending, cut taxes for the rich, and provide corporate welfare tax incentives to businesses. We've done that for the last 35 years in New York and across the United States, but instead of taking their extra money and investing in productive enterprises here, the corporations and wealthy investors used some of the money to move manufacturing abroad and the rest to speculate in the financial markets. So financial profits rose from 10 to 20 percent of corporate profits until the late 1980s to 30 to over 40 percent in the subsequent years. The extra money given the corporations and the super-rich to invest never trickled down to the rest of us in the form of good jobs at living wages.

In the last two years, the two major parties have joined forces to soak the working class taxpayers to the tune of trillions of dollars to bail out the big banks and insurance companies when their financial bubbles burst. Meanwhile, the enormous productive capacity of mature capitalism leaves an industrial base operating at only 60-70 percent of capacity. The factories can produce more than the workers can buy back. It will be many years before investors begin to invest in new productive facilities if investment decision are left to market forces alone.

We need a new productive system that is sustainable, because we face an environmental as well as an economic crisis. To deal with global warming, ocean acidification, resource depletion, toxic pollution, and ecosystem destruction, we need to rebuild our productive systems around sustainable principles. That means retrofitting all of our buildings for energy efficiency, building new systems of renewable energy and mass transit, and new systems of clean manufacturing and sustainable organic agriculture.

We know how to do this. We've done it before. We redirected production for the World War II mobilization and ended the Great Depression. We created millions of jobs in direct government employment in public works and services during the Great Depression through the Works Progress Administration. We now need to apply the same sense of urgency and commitment of resources to building a carbon-free energy system as the centerpiece of sustainable economy. This will both head off catastrophic climate change and put people back to work.

4. Where do you stand on the issue of horizontal drilling for natural gas and hydraulic fracturing in New York's Southern Tier? What kind of regulations are needed, and what would you need to hear from the DEC and EPA to support the expansion of gas drilling in the state?

I support a permanent ban on hydrofracking. It will destroy our key natural asset, abundant clean water, that should be the basis for a sustainable green prosperity going forward. And it is a dangerous diversion of resources and precious time away from building a clean renewable energy system. Natural gas is a dirty fossil fuel that releases greenhouse gases.

We should instead focus our energy policy and investments on the rapid transition to a safe, clean energy system based on conservation, efficiency and renewables. As the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico reminds us, 'Drill, Baby, Drill' inevitably means 'Spill, Baby, Spill.' Using hydraulic fracturing of rock formations in gas drilling results in the contamination of water, air and soil. And accidents inevitably happen, which result in major spills that can extend contamination far from the well site.

Hydrofracking means injecting toxic-laden fresh water and sand at extremely high pressure into rock layers to shatter the stone and release the gas. Each frack injects 2 to 9 million gallons of water with 20,000 to 90,000 gallons of toxic chemicals. There are a host of problems with hydrofracking that have occurred in thirty states, including

- **Pollution:** Contaminated drinking water aquifers and wells, reservoirs, lakes and streams. Toxic waste ponds full of the waste fluids that come back up the wellbore; there could be up to 40,000 of these ponds across the New York State if full-scale fracking is permitted.
- **Accidents:** Well blowouts, fires and explosions; Drilling fluid waste pond leaks and spills
- **Property Damage** Natural gas can seep into water systems and homes to pollute kitchen faucet water so it can be lit on fire, and cause houses and drinking water wells to explode. Banks often won't provide mortgages for property with leases for fracking.
- **Disease.** Residents of drilling areas can become chronically ill due to the seepage of carcinogens and neurotoxins into the air, water and soil. Repeated or prolonged exposure can cause liver, heart, blood and brain damage as well as leukemia and other cancers.

With a failure rate between 2 and 8 percent, hydrofracking poses an unacceptable risk to NYS's abundant water supplies, a natural resource that sustains our communities and is the state's most important natural resource base for sustainable economic development in the agriculture, manufacturing and tourism sectors.

5. What do you think is the future of nuclear energy in New York state and what role would it play in your energy policies as governor?

I oppose nuclear power.

I helped form the Clamshell Alliance that was pivotal in halting the spread of nuclear energy in the US when we occupied the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant site in 1977 and 1414 civil disobedients were arrested and held in National Guard Armories for 10 days.

Nuclear power plants were a bad idea three decades ago and they remain a bad idea today. They are way too costly, and pose major environmental and financial problems at every step of the way, from mining of the uranium fuel to operation to decommissioning to disposal of radioactive wastes. Even if you mistakenly decided to build more nukes, it would take so long to bring them on line that the effort to resolve climate change will have been won or lost long before they begin to operate. The 20 new nuclear plants proposed in the state's draft Climate Action Plan is lunacy. We should phase out New York's existing nukes as fast as we can build clean renewable sources to replace their capacity.

6. New York recently won “Race to the Top” funding, in part, because the state raised its cap on charter schools. Did you favor the lifting of the cap and what role do you think charter schools should play in improving New York’s public education system?

I oppose Charter Schools. Public money should be used for public schools that are accountable to the taxpayers through elected school boards. The innovations that charter schools supposedly offer can be achieved within the public schools through site-based management involving teachers and parents. I oppose the incentives in the stimulus package and the Race to the Top grants being used by the Obama administration to coerce states in fiscal crisis to pass laws that expand charter schools, evaluate teachers by their students' performance on standardized tests, and replace the public accountability of elected school boards with the corporate CEO structure of mayoral control.

The Democrats and Republicans are using the budget crisis to push charter schools on behalf of their campaign contributors in Wall Street banks and hedge funds who see profit opportunities in capturing public revenue streams. Hedge fund managers seeking to invest in charter schools have been mobilizing to support likely Democratic nominee Andrew Cuomo, according to the NY Times. We should be taxing these wealthy interests at higher rates to fund public education rather than allowing them to dismantle public education, attack teachers unions, and create a segregated two-tiered educational system for their own profit.

The only major national evaluation of charter schools, which was conducted by a Stanford University group, funded by pro-charter foundations, and released a year ago, found that, compared to regular public schools, 17% of charters got higher test scores, 46% had gains that were no different than their public counterparts, and 37% were significantly worse.

A century ago education reform meant replacing mayoral control with elected school boards because school systems had become corrupt crony networks in which mayors dispatched patronage jobs to unqualified teachers and administrators and contracts to construction and maintenance firms in return for campaign contributions. The old corruption is now coming back in Chicago, New Orleans, New York, and other cities with charter schools and mayoral control. Not only are charter schools diverting money from public schools, but politicians allied with real estate interests have closed public schools on valuable urban land in order to profit from their redevelopment.

According to reporting by Juan Gonzalez in the Daily News and on Democracy Now, wealthy investors and major banks have been making windfall profits by using a little-known federal tax break to finance new charter school construction. The program, the New Markets Tax Credit, is so lucrative that a lender who uses it can almost double his money in seven years. Under the New Markets program, a bank or private equity firm that lends money to a nonprofit to build a charter school can receive a 39% federal tax credit over seven years. The credit can even be piggybacked on other tax breaks for historic preservation or job creation.

In Albany, the drive for charter schools has been spearheaded by Tom Carroll, a leader of the Change NY right-wing movement that helped elect Pataki Governor. Carroll sits on the board of directors of NCB Capital Impact, a Virginia organization that used New Market Credits to pull together investors for all the Albany building

loans. The Virginia organization gets "a 3% originating and management fee" for all school construction deals that Brighter Choice arranges.

Much of the support from hedge funds for Cuomo is being organized by Joe Williams, executive director of Democrats for Education Reform, who include the founders of funds like Anchorage Capital Partners with \$8 billion under management, Greenlight Capital with \$6.8 billion, and Pershing Square Capital Management with \$5.5 billion.

Public rhetoric to the contrary, the charter cap actually accounted for a very small number (eight to thirteen according to various reports) of the 500 points New York could earn on its Race to the Top application with the federal government to obtain an additional \$700 million in funding.

New York's charters schools significantly under serve both minority and disabled students. A recent article in the Daily News reported "how in the South Bronx, charter schools have only about half the number of English language learners as do the district public schools that serve the same neighborhood. Charters as a group also enroll a much lower percentage of students with special needs than do district schools."

A UCLA Civil Rights Project study release in February found that charter schools have increased segregation. The study found that nearly 3 out of 4 black students who attend charters are in "intensely segregated" schools, with student populations that are at least 90 percent minority, twice the rate of regular public schools.

7. Why do you support or oppose same-sex marriage?

I support same-sex marriage because I support full rights for all members of our society, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Greens like Mayor Jason West and Deputy Mayor Rebecca Rotzler, both of New Paltz, provided critical leadership by performing same-sex marriages in 2003, which kicked-started the current marriage equality movement in New York.

I was disappointed that by the defeat earlier this year of the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act, which would protect against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression in areas like housing and employment.

The Green Party supports the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and transgender people in housing, jobs, benefits, child custody, civil marriage, medical benefits and all areas of life provided to other citizens.

In addition to same-sex marriage, I will advocate for:

- Legislation to provide penalties for acts of violence and intimidation motivated by bias based on race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or sexual orientation;
- The right of all persons to self-determination with regard to gender identity and sex; support transgender New Yorkers having equal health care insurance coverage for things like hormone treatments, appropriate routine medical care and screening, and gender confirming surgery;
- sufficient funding for the State Division of Human Rights to fulfill its duty to investigate complaints in a fair and timely manner, and earmarking funds to educate employers and the public at large on state human rights laws like the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA);
- legislation that would allow localities to do business only with companies that extend to domestic partners of their employees the same benefits that are extended to spouses;

youth in juvenile justice and other facilities operated by the Office of Children and Family Services should be protected from discrimination and bias harassment based on sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression;

- insurance companies should be required to sell domestic partner insurance policies on the same basis as spousal insurance coverage;

- legislation that would allow employees to use sick time to care for a sick family member, including domestic partners;

- full access to reproductive health and safe abortions.

8. During your term in office the state will be undergo the process of redistricting. Some of your opponents have promised to veto any redistricting plan that includes gerrymandered districts. What plan do you favor for redistricting?

I strongly support an independent reapportionment commission. Pledge to veto any lines drawn by the Legislature under the current redistricting system that lacks a controlling role by an acceptable independent commission.

However, redistricting will have minimal impact. Far more fundamental reforms such as proportional representation are needed.

The US is relatively rare among the world's democracies in that it uses a winner take all, single member district system to elect its legislative bodies. This system tend to create two center-right political parties funded by corporate interests. We need to adopt proportional representation for legislative bodies in order to create a multip-party democracy and instant runoff voting for single executive positions (e.g., Governor, Comptroller, US Senate, etc.)

Our single-member-district, winner-take-all election system entrenches the two-party system because it motivates defensive voting for the lesser evil against what who your fear most. As a result, most state legislative districts are one-party districts with no representation for political minorities. Your vote doesn't matter since in the vast majority of cases you know which party will win the election.

Instead, most democracies elect their legislative bodies though a voting system that allocates seats based on the percentage of votes the various parties received. This creates a legislative body that is reflective of the political makeup of the voters. New York's city council used this system 1938-49 and it led to the election of third-party and the first black members of the council.

In instant runoff voting, the winning candidate is required to have a majority of votes. Voters rank each candidate in order of preference. If no candidate wins a majority in the first round, the lowest rank candidate is eliminated and their next ranked candidate gets their vote. This process continues until one candidate has a majority.

In addition, rank and file members of the state legislature must agree to act as legislators and not cede all power to the majority leader / speaker. The power of the leader should be reduced by distributing staffing and resources to each legislator equally. Member items, which are used to reward or punish individual legislators, should be eliminated. The rules should allow any member to initiate hearings and motions to move legislation.

9. What would your first priority be upon being elected governor?

I would immediately issue a revised version of Gov. Paterson's Executive Order 24 to update and radically strengthen the state's greenhouse gas emissions goal and its Climate Action Plan to reflect what climate science now says we need to do to avert catastrophic climate change: reduce state's net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2020 – a carbon-free economy in 10 years.

Gov. Paterson's 2009 Executive Order No. 24 goal of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 utterly too late and too little to avert catastrophic climate change. The US federal goals in the Copenhagen Accord announced in January 2010 to reduce carbon emissions below 2005 levels by 30% in 2025, 42% in 2030, and 83% by 2050 are just as inadequate.

The strengthened Climate Action Plan would lead to the creation of hundreds of thousands of green climate jobs as well as address the climate crisis.

10. Our current governor was not elected to the office he now holds. If you were unable to finish your term, why would your running mate make a good chief executive?

Gloria Mattera would represent the public interests of the vast majority of New Yorkers who earn their keep by working, not the narrow special interests of the big banks and corporations that fund the major party candidates. Gloria Mattera, a health care and peace activist from Brooklyn, holds a Masters' Degree in Special Education. After teaching children with special needs for 5 years, Mattera entered the field of Child Life. She has worked with underserved, immigrant children and their families in the NYC public hospital system for over 20 years. Mattera is a long time Executive Board member of Physicians for A National Health Program NY Metro Chapter and on the steering committee of Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn.

Gloria Mattera has been active in the Green Party in NYS since 2001 and has stood for local office as a Green Party candidate on three occasions. Mattera ran for City Council in District 39 in Brooklyn in 2001 and 2003. As a first time candidate in 2001, Mattera highlighted the growing inequities in NYC at a time when Wall Street and real estate developers were reaping huge profits as hunger, poverty and homelessness were on the rise. She reached out to the Muslim communities in her district who were being targeted and joined fellow peace activists in opposing the bombing of Afghanistan in the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks. Challenging the Democratic incumbent in 2003, Mattera placed second with close to 20% of the vote by continuing her campaign theme of the billions spent on war abroad would be better served by providing health care, housing and union-scale jobs here at home. In 2005, Mattera challenged incumbent Marty Markowitz for Brooklyn Borough President, after he enraged local communities by championing the use of eminent domain to seize homes for the benefit of private developer Bruce Ratner's professional basketball arena and a multiple high-rise tower project. Mattera advocated human scale development driven by community specific needs that promoted sustainability and offered truly affordable housing.

Mattera was successful in raising enough funds for each campaign to qualify for campaign finance matching funds. Her campaigns, along with the active Park Slope Green Party local, have been instrumental in making the Green Party an integral part of local politics in Central Brooklyn. On the state level, Mattera served as co-chair for the party from 2004 – 2008 and is a member of several committees within the Green Party of the United States Party.

Before joining the Green Party, Mattera was involved in the Founding Convention of the Labor Party under union and environmental activist, Tony Mazzochi. Mattera worked with several unions in the NYS to build a statewide organization and one of the largest local chapters in the country. She held several leadership positions locally and in the state and was a member of the Labor Party's National Just Health Care Task Force.

11. How should the state deal with the issue of taxing cigarettes sold on Native American reservations to non-Indians?

Stop trying to nickel and dime the Indians for \$150 million in taxes. That is a little over 1/1000th of the \$136 billion state budget. Now that the Indians start making some money, the state is going after them. Not much seems to have changed since the 1700s and 1800s.

The Indian nations are sovereign nations that our nation recognized by solemn treaties, which the US Constitution recognize in its supremacy clause to be the Supreme Law of the Land, along with the Constitution itself and federal laws made in pursuance of the Constitution. We should all be worried when our elected leaders try to disregard the law. After the Indians, who's next?

12. Along the campaign trail what has been the most interesting, delicious or memorable food you've been served?

Biscotti made by Rock Hill Bake House in Glens Falls.