



Reaction to NYS Budget

Overall

Where is the “New Albany?” Key decisions on public financed campaigns and congestion pricing were left to an appointed commission and panels and little was done to curb huge corruption risks. Despite Democrats controlling both houses of the legislature and the governor’s office, the state budget passed in the wee hours of the morning after secretive negotiations.

Clean Contracting and Economic Development

- Hopeful that a useful *Database of Deals* will be created by ESD per \$500k appropriation. We far preferred assembly and senate bills that included uniform definition of job and specific reporting requirements.
- Disappointed that Governor did not put in law Comptroller’s “pre-audit” examination of SUNY/CUNY contracting related to \$1B Upstate bid rigging.

Fair Elections and Voting

- Hopeful that commission will implement public matching campaign finance system. We far preferred new public matching system in law. Disappointed in resistance in Assembly to public matching program and reducing contribution limit.
- Applause for large number of voting reforms passed since January.

MTA and Accountable Authorities

- Applause for passage of congestion pricing, a historic accomplishment by Governor Cuomo.
- Concern about details, including toll exemptions, being determined 30 days before tolling begins.
- Concern about explosion of new MTA related panels and requirements, and reduced accountability.
- Concern about estimated \$50M MTA Legislative Capital Projects Slush Fund
- Disappointment in hasty Senate Democratic confirmation of new MTA chief.

Clean Contracting and Economic Development

The state budget failed to enact in law needed public integrity measures and deferred action instead.

[On Clean Contracting, Governor Cuomo and the legislature retreated from their preliminary budgets](#) in which the Governor, Speaker Heastie and President and Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins all supported restoring the comptroller's pre-audit authority and establishing a Database of Deals. The comptroller's pre-audit authority was not in the budget at all while the Database of Deals will be established administratively. During a press conference yesterday, Governor Cuomo said pre-audit authority was done already but Comptroller DiNapoli has not had his pre-audit authority restored. The budget does allocate \$500K for a Database of Deals, but there is no specificity regarding what information needs to be disclosed about business subsidies or requirements for the functionality of the Database.

Fair Elections and Voting

On public financing, the Governor and legislative leaders created a commission that may establish public financing. [Reinvent Albany has concerns about the structure and charge of the commission](#) but we will work with our Fair Elections colleagues and the Commission to make it as much of a success as possible. Most concerning is there is no guarantee the Commission will vote in favor of establishing a working public matching program and gridlock could occur over the appointment of a 9th member, who must be approved by the Governor and legislative leaders. The Governor and legislature continued their excellent work modernizing voting, providing reasonable levels of funding for early voting and e-poll books, putting e-poll books in statute, and establishing online voter registration in law. This follows sweeping reforms in January advancing same-day registration, no-excuse absentee voting, and establishing registration portability across counties.

MTA and Accountable Authorities

While we strongly support the passage of congestion pricing, as it will provide a steady source of revenue for the MTA while providing environmental benefits, this change came along with a number of new MTA structures and requirements that diffuse accountability rather than improve it.

A new requirement regarding development of a plan for MTA reorganization to be completed by June 30, 2019 will be an unnecessarily rushed process. The MTA wasn't broken in a day and shouldn't be fixed within an artificial deadline.

New structures such as the Traffic Mobility Review Board and a "construction review unit" add unnecessary complexity and opacity to MTA operations.

We are also concerned by language that provides the Legislature a potential slush fund of MTA Capital projects - allowing the leadership to distribute an unknown amount of funds via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), similar to past lump sums which have been used by the legislative leaders to reward loyalty and wrangle support among the membership.

The appointment of Pat Foye as Chairman/CEO on a Sunday, with no prior notice gives the impression that this was part of the budget deal - a position this important shouldn't be traded as part of a budget. Confirmation of the official who will head the largest service provider in the state should have been considered separately, with full public notice and time for vetting.