

# **TAXATION & FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

## **- POLICY STATEMENT -**

To achieve a balanced budget, either government spending must be reduced or more tax dollars must be raised. Economic growth can be encouraged by wise government spending; however, the Grange supports a prudent fiscal policy by curtailing expenditures in several areas. We recommend action be taken to move toward balanced general fund budgets and reduction of fraud at all levels of government. Future generations should not be burdened with the expenditures of today. The growth of government debt must be stopped. Authorities should vigorously prosecute those who commit fraud at all levels of Government.

Local governments are being strangled by the weight of mandates. These mandates must be fully funded by the government of origin. We call upon the Governor and State Legislature to repeal costly unfunded mandates. We favor a constitutional amendment to bar the state from imposing any new mandate services on local governments unless the state fully funds these mandates.

Alternative tax sources should be explored that are more fair and equitable than our current tax policies. Dedicated funds must be used solely for the purpose for which they were intended.

Timely passage of the New York State Budget is a necessity, along with eliminating the 3-person control (Governor, Senate Majority Leader and the Assembly Speaker) of budget development and timing. The New York State Grange strongly supports reform efforts to correct this situation.

October 2011

## **BANKS AND SAVINGS/LOAN ASSOCIATIONS**

### **MUNICIPAL DEPOSITS IN CREDIT UNIONS AND THRIFT INSTITUTIONS**

We request the State Legislature to enact legislation that amends all applicable state laws to allow local governments to deposit public funds in credit unions, savings banks and savings and loan associations. (2011)

## **BOTTLE DEPOSITS**

### **UNCLAIMED BOTTLE DEPOSIT MONEY**

We support legislative action to make sure that the unclaimed bottle deposit money (when available) is dedicated only to help fund environmental programs (cleanup, educational outreach

programs and needed coordinators) all necessary to keep us in compliance with state mandates that each community must have an active solid waste and recycling program with a high percentage of resident participation. (2009)

### **EXPANDED BOTTLE BILL**

We support a legislative change that would approve a five-cent deposit on all beverage bottles and cans including wine, liquor, water, sports drinks, juice and soda, to further help keep our highways and roadsides clean. (2007)

## **BUSINESS/INDUSTRY**

### **NEW YORK STATE POPULATION OUTFLOW**

We urge our elected officials to take into consideration the need to lower the taxes in New York State that cause vibrant industries to leave the state for areas that present a better financial return because of lower taxing demands. (2010)

### **JOB OUTSOURCING**

We support tax break incentives for only those companies who keep all jobs in the United States by keeping all of their production business physically in the United States, further that a symmetrical tariff of 27.5% be imposed on all Chinese products and remove sanctions once China has moved to a market-based currency. (2009)

### **SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2008**

We support proposed legislation in the New York State Assembly that would enact the Small Business Improvement Act of 2008 by establishing an internet list of regulatory reform and economic development projects. (2008)

### **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (IDAs)**

We support legislation which would merge several Industrial Development Agencies (IDA's) and make other reforms to curb IDA misuses. (2007)

## **COMPENSATION/WAGES**

### **RETRO-ACTIVE VETERANS COMPENSATION**

We support legislation requiring the Department of Veteran Affairs to pay the widow/widowers or estates of Veterans, any retro-active disability benefits should the Veteran die before the submitted claim is processed. (2008)

## **CREDIT CARDS**

### **INTEREST RATES**

We support legislation that would amend the Credit Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009 by setting a maximum interest rate for all credit cards and by fining those who issue credit cards and attempt to make up possible losses by imposing fees, higher interest rates or other charges on responsible card holders who pay their entire balance in full each month. (2009)

### **UNSOLICITED CREDIT CARDS**

We ask that credit card companies be prohibited from sending unsolicited credit cards. (2007)

## **ELECTED OFFICIALS**

### **REIMBURSEMENT FOR STATE LAWMAKERS**

We favor legislation that requires state lawmakers be reimbursed only the amount verified by submitted receipts, not to exceed federal guidelines, and that the State Comptroller post lawmakers' total monthly reimbursement on the [OpenbookNY.com](http://OpenbookNY.com) website where the office currently posts agency spending. (2010)

## **FUEL/GASOLINE**

### **REDUCTION OF GASOLINE TAX**

We urge the New York State Legislature to enact a law reducing the gasoline tax to lower the overall cost of a gallon of gasoline. (2010)

### **GAS TAX HIKE**

We support maintaining the current New York State cap on gasoline sales taxes. (2008)

## **HEALTH CARE**

### **TAXES ON HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES IN NEW YORK STATE**

We oppose any new taxes on hospitals and nursing homes. (2009)

## **HIGHWAYS/INTERSTATES**

### **THRUWAY TOLLS**

We request that New York State Thruway Authority remove the collection of all tolls at Lackawanna Exit #55, Blasdell Exit #56, Hamburg Exit #57 and westbound at Eden/Angola Exit #57A. (2010)

### **NORTHEAST CORRIDOR HIGHWAY**

We urge that appropriate parties become aware of the study and the impact of the Northeast Corridor Highway on northern New York State (from Watertown to the state of Maine). (2010)

### **TOLLS ON INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS**

We oppose the imposition of tolls on interstate highways. (2009)

### **ROAD FUEL TAX**

We recommend the passing of legislation that would establish a dedicated fund for Road Fuel Taxes, and that this dedicated fund be used for New York State bridge and road repairs. (2008)

### **INCREASED TOLLS AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE NYS THRUWAY**

We oppose a second consecutive year of increasing toll rates for the NYS Thruway in 2009 and 2010. (2008)

### **IMPROVING LOCAL TOWN ROADS**

We seek legislative action to increase highway funding to assist town governments in providing adequate rural roads. (2007)

## **LICENSE PLATES**

### **NEW LICENSE PLATES**

We support efforts to stop or delay the implementation of mandatory new license plate purchases. (2009)

## **LOCAL COURTS & GOVERNMENT/SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

### **MANDATE RELIEF**

We support the passage of a constitutional amendment to bar the state from imposing any new mandate services on local governments unless the state pays for the requirements. (2011)

We call upon the Governor and State Legislature to repeal costly unfunded mandates on local government, including: 1) raising the project cost thresholds before WICKS would be applicable; 2) reform prevailing wage; and 3) including the ability to pay, without raising taxes, as a priority consideration for binding arbitration panels. (2011)

### **REPEAL OF WICKS LAW FOR MUNICIPALITIES AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

We seek legislation to repeal the Wicks Law for all municipalities and school districts. (2007)

### **INCREASE IN JUSTICE COURT FUNDING**

We seek legislative action to revise General Municipal Law 99-1 that would increase reimbursement fees to Towns and Villages to assist local taxpayers in funding justice court operational expenses. (2007)

## **MILITARY**

### **CUTS TO MILITARY PAY AND BENEFITS**

We strongly oppose legislation that would cut the pay and benefits of our active duty and retired military service members. (2011)

## **MOTOR VEHICLES/INSURANCE**

### **TIGHTENING OF NO-FAULT INSURANCE REGULATIONS**

We support passage of legislation that would address fraud and abuse in no-fault cases, eliminating loopholes that innovative criminal enterprises have used to exploit the system. (2011)

### **MOTOR VEHICLE ENFORCEMENT FEES**

We support the permanent extension of the \$5 Motor Vehicle Law Enforcement Fee. (2008)

## **PENSION/RETIREMENT PLANS**

### **SOCIAL SECURITY INCREASE**

We support legislation that would give an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase to Social Security recipients and further, that Social Security payments should increase by the amount of cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), plus cost of any increased Medicare premiums. (2011)

## **NYS PENSION RETIREMENT AGE**

We support leaving the retirement age at 55, for employees covered under the New York State Retirement System, having 10 years of service. (2009)

## **PENSIONS FOR CONVICTED FELONS**

We urge the passage of legislation that would oversee a change in pension rules and other benefits pertaining to members of Congress who have been convicted of felonies. (2007)

## **PERSONAL INJURY AWARDS**

### **CAP ON NON-ECONOMIC DAMAGES**

We support legislative action, which would establish a \$500,000 cap on non-economic damages (and suffering awards) in all personal injury cases, except in cases of willful, wanton or gross negligence. (2007)

## **PERSONAL TAXES/INCOME**

### **IRS PLANS**

We oppose any sale of information from individual tax returns to any agency or individual. (2011)

### **LIVING WAGE**

We favor legislation that would establish a living wage above the poverty level for all eligible employees working on federal contracts. (2011)

### **TAXATION OF INVESTMENT INCOME**

We are supportive of the proposed legislation to exempt the first \$500 or greater of interest and dividend income from state income taxes to encourage savings through investments and to help protect retirement income from depreciation through inflation. (2011)

### **PERSONAL INCOME TAX FILING**

We recommend simplifying the language that is used in government's instructions for filing personal state and federal income taxes. (2010)

### **WITHHOLDING NEW YORK STATE INCOME TAX REFUNDS**

We strongly support legislation to prevent the Governor from issuing an Executive Order to hold back income tax refunds. (2010)

## **FIREMAN AND VOLUNTEER TAX DEDUCTION**

We support legislative action that would make the volunteer firemen and medical emergency personnel deduction a line item deduction of no less than \$500, in place of an itemized deduction. (2007)

## **EXEMPTION CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

We request the State Legislature to establish additional incentives for emergency service volunteers (firemen and rescue squads), such as greater levels of reduced property tax assessments. (2007)

## **PROPERTY TAXES**

### **FUNDING DISTRIBUTIONS FROM THE STAR EXEMPTION PROGRAM**

We support the examination of funding distribution to schools for the STAR Exemption Program so that equal distribution is given to upstate schools that are more susceptible to economic factors than are more affluent areas. (2010)

### **PRESERVATION OF LOCAL TAXATION ON CERTAIN LANDS OWNED BY NEW YORK STATE**

We support the present authority for taxation of certain state lands and urge the State Legislature to develop a uniform policy for the taxation of certain state lands used for private use. (2008)

### **PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

We oppose the passage of legislation for property tax reform that would take away property tax exemptions from non-profit organizations, such as religious orders and land trusts etc. unless they can prove that the property is used primarily as part of their core mission. (2008)

### **REFORM FOR CONDOMINIUM ASSESSMENTS**

We seek legislative action to repeal the Real Property Law, Section 339-y to provide equal treatment for all residential housing. (2007)

### **WORKING FARMLAND TAX CREDIT**

We support legislative efforts to create Working Farmland Tax Credit on land enrolled in certified agricultural districts, in exchange for an 8-year deed encumbrance to prevent non-farm development. (2007)

## **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

### **NEW YORK STATE SAFETY NET PROGRAM**

We support legislation that would require residents to apply for Safety Net Programs in the county in which they are legal residents. (2011)

### **NEW YORK STATE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

We support legislation that would require residents to apply for Family Assistance Programs in the county in which they are legal residents. (2011)

## **SOCIAL SECURITY**

### **SOCIAL SECURITY LOCKBOX LAW**

We support legislation that would fully protect and strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund. (2011)

### **DOUBLE TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND PENSION FUNDS**

We seek federal legislation that makes all Social Security benefits tax exempt when paid during retirement. (2011)

### **INSURING PRIVATE SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNTS**

If private Social Security accounts are implemented, we strongly favor the Federal Government insuring the private accounts, in an effort to prevent fraud and misuse by private agencies. (2010)

### **PRIVATE SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNTS**

We strongly oppose directing any monies from the Social Security System into private accounts or the stock market. (2007)

## **STATE PARKS**

### **CLOSING N.Y. STATE PARKS DUE TO BUDGETARY SHORTFALL**

We support that state parks and historic sites remain open with the same hours of operation, same seasons of operation and the same levels of access to public facilities at the same level of service of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, and further we oppose the closing of parks and historic sites as a way to close budget gaps. (2010)

## **STAR REBATE PROGRAM**

### **CONTINUATION OF PROGRAM**

We support inclusion of the STAR Rebate Program in future budgets. (2009)

### **S OR C CORPORATIONS**

We support the enactment of legislation which would extend the STAR Exemption to farms owned by S or C corporations or partnerships, provided that a shareholder or partner has his primary residence on the farm receiving the exemption. (2007)

## **STATE BUDGET/FUNDS**

### **PENALTY FOR LATE NEW YORK STATE BUDGET**

We favor that for every day without an adopted New York State Budget after the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, the New York State Legislators be fined two days' pay until the budget is adopted, the fines to be imposed by the Attorney General. (2010)

### **MEMBER ITEMS FOR STATE LEGISLATURE**

We favor legislation that would allow line items for each legislator's discretionary use, providing there is a source of revenue to cover all member items statewide without increasing taxes to do so; that all recipients must pass a legitimacy test by the Attorney General's Office and each elected Senator and Assembly Member would receive the same amount of funding for their member items. (2010)

### **SWEEPING DEDICATED FUNDS**

We strongly oppose the practice of sweeping dedicated funds for the purpose of balancing the State Budget, and that appropriate legislation be enacted to prevent this practice. (2008)

### **UNFUNDED MANDATES**

We support legislation which would restrict the imposition of unfunded mandates on political subdivisions (local governments) of the state. (2008)

## **STATE OFFICES/PROGRAMS**

### **LOTTERY MONEY FOR EDUCATION**

We support the increase of money sent to schools above budgeted state funding and further that more assistance be given to New York students attending colleges in New York State and that the amount spent for lottery advertising be cut to help meet the above goals. (2009)

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY TAX**

We urge the New York State Legislature to repeal the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Mobility Tax (MCTMT) for the counties of Rockland, Orange, Putnam and Dutchess. (2009)