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Governor Spitzer Announces Economic Security Agenda For New York 's Working Families Names Economic Security Cabinet

Governor Eliot Spitzer today laid out his economic security agenda in a speech delivered at the Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center, a job training facility in Harlem run by the non-profit organization Seedco. The goal is to strengthen and grow the middle class by helping New York's low income, working families achieve financial security.

To help implement this agenda he announced the formation of an Economic Security Cabinet that will bring together 17 state agencies to provide new focus on the needs of working families. The Cabinet's four objectives are to: (1) reduce New York's high cost of living; (2) establish educational and workforce development opportunities for a highly competitive economy; (3) improving services that target low-income, working New Yorkers at risk of falling into the social safety net; and (4) bring back jobs into our communities.

"In my first State of the State Address, I outlined a vision for One New York – a place where economic opportunity and security are available to every single New Yorker," said Governor Spitzer. "Our first seven months in office have been spent establishing the foundation for that vision.

Governor Spitzer added: "New York leads the nation in the gap between rich and poor. My economic security agenda is focused on low income, working New Yorkers who are one step away from economic peril, and who are neither firmly established in the middle class nor firmly supported by the full array of programs that make up our social safety net. These families work hard and play by the rules. They have done their part. Now we must do ours. That is where state government can play a role – to make certain that no New Yorker falls through the cracks."

The Economic Security Agenda will focus on the following:

Addressing the Perfect Storm of Unaffordability

Housing:

The Governor recently announced a program to allow low- to moderate-income homeowners with risky mortgages to refinance their mortgages at competitive rates to avoid foreclosure, as well as new funding to construct more than 3,000 units of affordable housing, and the State's Housing Finance Agency has approved financings that will preserve over 1,200 affordable units statewide.

Child Care:

The Governor signed into law a new child care tax credit for New York City families that will give 49,000 eligible New York City families with incomes of \$30,000 or less up to \$1,000 to help pay for child care needs. In addition, families this year received a child tax credit of up to \$330 per child aged 4-18 that will help working families with the costs of raising children.

Property Tax Relief:

The first budget enacted a \$1.3 billion property tax cut specifically engineered to target middle class New Yorkers who need relief the most.

Nutritional Support:

The administration took the first steps towards implementing a "Working Families Food Stamp Initiative," to enroll an additional 100,000 working families in our food stamp program for New Yorkers who are off welfare, but in need of further support. The program will draw down \$200 million in federal funds to be pumped directly into our local economies.

Increasing Educational Opportunity in a Knowledge Economy

Education Funding and Reform:

In addition to making the largest educational investment in state history, the budget targeted those funds to districts with the greatest needs, provided funds that will lead to the first-ever statewide universal pre-kindergarten program, and charged the Higher Education Commission with developing better ways to integrate community colleges into the broader workforce development pipeline.

Workforce Development:

In addition to providing traditional job training, the Governor is working to coordinate efforts between the business community and government to make sure that we are investing in the training businesses need. Initiatives include the Advance New York program that provides funds for training that will result in higher wages for workers, and the Regional Economic Transition Strategy, which will help communities identify emerging industries and develop training to meet those businesses' needs. The Governor also today announced a new program \$2.5 million commitment to EDGE programs across the state that provide instruction in English as a Second Language, adult basic education, GED preparation, and targeted job skills training in high-demand occupations.

Strengthening our Safety Net and Sharing Risk

Increasing Workers' Compensation Benefits:

The recently implemented workers compensation package is increasing benefits for workers, the Department of Labor has stepped up enforcement of minimum wage requirements, and in coming weeks the administration will deliver a proposal to address the problem of misclassification of workers, which deprives hundreds of thousands of workers of the benefits they deserve.

Health Care:

In addition to expanding health care to the 400,000 children without coverage and streamlining Medicaid enrollment to ensure that the 900,000 adults eligible for health coverage receive and maintain coverage, the administration worked with the Legislature to enact the Family Health Plus Buy-In program to allow employers to pay for their employees to participate in the State's low-cost insurance plan at a price they can afford. In addition, public hearings will begin next month on options for providing universal coverage.

Paid Family Leave:

The administration's paid family leave proposal that would help support working families through challenging times was passed by the Assembly and awaits action from the Senate.

Enforcing Workers Rights:

While the minimum wage rose to \$7.15 at the beginning of this year, too many minimum-wage workers have not seen their wages reflect that increase. In response, the Department of Labor has increased their enforcement unit by 10 percent.

Bringing Good Jobs to our Communities

Refocusing State Economic Development Efforts:

Through a strategy to revitalize neighborhoods and create jobs for needy communities, the Governor will be meeting with local economic development leaders throughout the state to identify sound investments for economic development spending that will create jobs in neighborhoods that are struggling economically rather than focusing primarily on the mega-development projects, particularly in Manhattan as has been done in the past.

Agencies participating in the Economic Security Cabinet include: Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; Department of Agriculture and Markets; Banking Department; Division of Budget; Office of Children and Family Services; State Education Department; Empire State Development Corporation; Department of Health; Higher Education Services Corporation; Division of Housing and Community Renewal; Division of Human Rights; Insurance Department; Department of Labor; Public Service Commission; SUNY/CUNY System; Department of Taxation and Finance; Office for Technology.