



Legislative Agenda 2010-11

SCAA's Guiding Principles:

- A strong start for children
- Emphasis on prevention
- Affordable health care for all
- Make work feasible
- Streamlined programs for families
- A tax system that provides sufficient revenue and supports work
- Safety net for non-workers
- Housing and services for vulnerable individuals

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

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Introduction

As the economy stumbles, New York State finds its tax revenue plunging just as applications for public assistance increase. More and more financially strapped families who struggled to make ends meet before the “Great Recession” are being pushed to destitution. Hardest hit are the young, less well-educated workers, especially high school dropouts, and certain categories of service workers. Blue collar workers, particularly those in the construction industry, have also been clobbered.¹

Many economists believe, and the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) agrees, that the course to recovery is some blend of direct government spending and putting money into the hands of consumers. New York State needs an economic recovery policy that works for everyone, not just those at the top of the income ladder. That means giving direct help to destitute individuals, assisting laid-off and underpaid workers and investing in proven educational, health and mental health programs that enable people to become self-sufficient and productive.

The 2010-2011 *Executive Budget* contains a number of proposals that address the plight of New York State’s most vulnerable residents, and SCAA solidly endorses them. We also have proposals of our own: to safeguard programs for vulnerable New Yorkers; to protect “seed corn” investments essential to the state’s future prosperity; and to give special consideration to programs that show evidence of successful outcomes. They are the heart of SCAA’s Legislative Agenda for 2010-11.

Among other revenue-generating ideas, this year Governor Paterson recommended a new 18% tax on soda and other sugary drinks. A penny-per-ounce excise tax on soft drinks would raise an estimated \$1.2 billion for New York State.

Not only that, research shows that sugar-sweetened beverages contribute mightily to the obesity epidemic, which is linked to higher rates of costly, but preventable diseases like diabetes, heart disease, dental disease, cancer, asthma and hypertension. Taxes on tobacco products are highly effective in reducing consumption. Longitudinal and interventional studies reveal that increasing the price of tobacco products discourages children from picking up the habit. Data also indicate that the Governor’s proposed levy on sugared beverages could reduce consumption of those products by more than 10%, a dramatic public health benefit.

SCAA wholeheartedly supports an increase in the tobacco sales tax, as well as introduction of an excise tax on soft drinks. Income generated from these taxes alone will not cure New York State’s fiscal anemia. But, they are a welcome prescription for healthier communities. The principles on the inside cover continue to guide SCAA’s work.

¹ Herbert, Bob. "The Worst of the Pain." [New York Times](#) 9 Feb. 2010.

Children's Initiatives

SCAA supports the following 2010-2011 Executive Budget proposals:

- Right-sizing of juvenile justice facilities and an investment of \$18 million to improve staffing ratios and mental health services.
- Increased funding for child welfare “65/35” preventive funding.
- Subsidized guardianship as an option for permanency.
- Maintenance of funding for Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS).
- Increased funding for Bridges to Health to provide 3,305 slots.

SCAA proposes the following changes in the 2010-2011 Executive Budget:

- Restore \$202 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for program services for vulnerable children and families including funds for home visiting, child care, Advantage Afterschool, Alternatives to Detention and Residential Placement and housing services.
- Add \$40-\$50 million to the state Child Care Block Grant.
- Restore funding for the Healthy Families New York (HFNY) program for a total of \$25 million.
- Restore funding for afterschool programs to FY 2009-10 levels. This includes a restoration of Advantage Afterschool funding to \$30.5 million and Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention funding to \$27.8 million.

Economic Security

SCAA proposes the following changes in the 2010-2011 Executive Budget:

- Implement the Public Assistance Grant increase as scheduled, providing a 10% increase for the 2010-11 budget year for families most deeply affected by the recession.
- Increase the Unemployment Insurance benefit amount to equal 50% of the average weekly wage, and index the benefit at 50% for the future.

Health Care

SCAA supports the following 2010-2011 Executive Budget proposals:

- Support the sugar sweetened beverage tax to reduce the consumption of beverages which have been linked repeatedly to obesity and dental disease. Revenue generated from this tax must be used for public health purposes.
- Support the \$1 per pack increase in the tobacco tax to keep more children from becoming smokers.
- Support consolidating funding streams to promote efficiency and provide additional flexibility in program areas. If consolidations reduce the need for more extensive cuts and the Department of Health can still provide necessary services to New Yorkers, such efforts should be allowed to move forward. There must be careful oversight of these areas to ensure that program goals continue to be met.
- Support proposals to simplify eligibility and enrollment in Medicaid and Child Health Plus. The Department of Health should also be given the authority to move forward with *Express Lane* eligibility as authorized in the federal Child Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA).

SCAA proposes the following changes in the 2010-2011 Executive Budget:

- Restore funding for adult home advocacy. The Coalition for Institutionalized and Aged Disabled (CIAD) is a small organization which works day to day with residents directly in adult homes. We ask that their small amount of funding be restored so that residents can continue to have an advocate in their corner.

Mental Health

SCAA supports the following 2010-2011 Executive Budget proposals:

- Restructure existing services for the implementation of the Children's Plan, including redesigning base resources for Clinic Plus services to improve clinical and operational functioning of children's clinic treatment; and redirecting under-utilized resources for residential units to expand community capacity to serve children and their families at home.

SCAA proposes the following changes in the 2010-2011 Executive Budget:

- Add additional money for new housing for adult homes residents. The judge's decision in the recent lawsuit against the state said that existing housing violated resident's rights under the American's with Disabilities Act. The \$1 million in the *Executive Budget* to begin assessments of impacted Adult Home residents and funding to start the process of developing 200 community beds in 2011-2012 is an inadequate remedy to the lawsuit. New York must stop paying for inappropriate settings.

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