

ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

50 measures the new governor can take in the first 100 days to Reform New York.

SUMMARY

At the dawn of the last century, New York state government was a model for the nation. The programs started under New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt offered a model for many of the national reforms advocated by the Progressives. The programs later developed by New York Governors Al Smith and Franklin Roosevelt were the models used to help bring the nation out of the Great Depression.

Sadly, by the end of the last century, New York state government had become the model of what not to do – a government of gridlock widely ridiculed as the most dysfunctional in the nation.

New Yorkers deserve a state government that epitomizes integrity, innovation and competence – a government that operates in the open, is accountable to the public it serves, and tackles the problems facing the state.

The new governor must be the person who ensures that the relationship between the governed and the government is fundamentally altered. Gubernatorial support for the “Actions for Change” should result in a government known for its openness, its accountability and its energy in tackling the key issues facing the state.

1. Issue an executive order requiring state agencies to follow the spirit as well as the letter of the Freedom of Information Law. Also require agencies to post FOIL-able information on the Internet.
2. Issue an executive order that requires state agencies to produce and post on the Internet annual reports—reports that not only discuss their activities, but also examine the agencies’ delivery of measurable public services.
3. Instruct New York State budget officials to prepare materials that maximize public understanding of budget items, including bolstering the oversight of spending on “member items.”
4. Propose legislation creating an independent budget office. In addition, convene a panel of respected individuals to screen candidates for the appointment of an independent head of the Division of the Budget.
5. Propose in the executive budget the creation of a New York State “C-SPAN” modeled on the successful federal program. Make executive agencies offer cable TV access to public meetings.
6. Propose legislation creating an independent redistricting commission and pledge opposition to lines drawn by the legislature.
7. Propose legislation creating an independent ethics commission to have jurisdiction over both the executive and legislative branches. In addition, convene a panel of independent individuals to screen candidates for the State Ethics Commission’s membership and executive director.

8. Issue an executive order prohibiting non-elected members of the executive branch from raising campaign funds for personal political committees. Propose ethics reform legislation to raise the ethical standards of state government.
9. Propose legislation to create a Health Care Cost Containment Council. Issue an executive order requiring the health department to report financial and quality information on licensed health facilities.
10. Propose campaign finance reform legislation that relies on public monies for candidates for state elective office and convene a summit with the legislative leaders to bring real pressure for action.
11. Propose lobbying reform legislation that ends “pay to play” practices. Issue an executive order requiring that those seeking government contracts voluntarily agree to end involvement in campaign fundraising activities.
12. Use executive powers to establish a blue ribbon panel to recommend changes in the state election’s system – including implementation of HAVA.
13. Propose legislation to allow voters the option of registering and voting on Election Day.
14. Propose public authorities reform legislation. Coordinate with the comptroller to work to justify the number and oversight of existing authorities. Ensure that the Authorities Budget Office operates independent of political interference.
15. Use executive powers to increase the state’s use of renewable “green” energy.
16. Use executive powers to create a statewide energy plan that relies on conservation, efficiency and reliance on alternative energy sources. In addition, propose legislation to modernize the state’s energy planning process.
17. Use executive powers to continue the state’s support for following the California auto emissions standards and advance a stronger cap on carbon emissions.
18. Use executive powers to oppose the construction of new nuclear power plants and oppose any relicensing of existing plants in New York.
19. Use executive powers to require analyses of the placement of environmental facilities so that low-income communities are not receiving a disproportionate share of such facilities.
20. Use executive powers to dramatically reduce the amount of solid waste generated in the state and boost recycling programs.
21. Include the revenues generated by the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill in the 2007 Executive Budget.
22. Issue an executive order banning the household burning of garbage.
23. Issue an executive order directing state environmental officials (DEC) to resume publishing annual reports on the progress toward meeting recycling and waste management goals.

24. Issue an executive order phasing out the use of hazardous pesticides on state-owned property and to direct the DEC to toughen its pesticide registration process, including requiring companies to disclose so-called “inert” ingredients.
25. Use executive powers to establish a task force to make recommendations for reducing children’s exposures to pesticides.
26. Propose legislation granting local governments the option to regulate pesticide use more stringently than the state.
27. Use executive powers to ensure that the new environmental cleanup program for Superfund and brownfield sites protects public health and the environment.
28. Issue an executive order to direct the DEC to resume publishing the annual Superfund Registry Report and expand it to include all the environmental remediation programs.
29. Use executive powers to increase DEC staffing for enforcement of environmental cleanup and spill-prevention programs and provide the DEC with adequate staffing and funding to carry out the department’s responsibilities to clean up offsite contamination and protect and restore groundwater.
30. Issue an executive order to establish a state procurement policy that favors environmentally-friendly goods, services and technologies.
31. Use executive powers to boost the state’s efforts to protect the New York City watershed. Issue an executive order requiring that all relevant agencies live up their responsibilities as prescribed in the agreement to protect the watershed.
32. Ensure that the state Health Department, which is seeking primacy for overseeing the New York City water supply, has adequate funding and staffing.
33. Use executive powers to ensure that the state will increase land acquisition efforts in the Catskill watershed.
34. Use executive powers to protect wetlands in the Catskills by lowering the size of guarded lands from 12.4 acres to 1 acre and preventing ill-conceived development in the watershed, such as the proposed Belleayre Resort at Catskill Park.
35. Ensure compliance with Phase II stormwater regulations to reduce phosphorus levels in water supplies.
36. Issue an executive order to create an executive branch task force of the relevant agencies to reduce health costs for the state by demanding higher quality of care from facilities seeking to provide service to state beneficiaries.
37. Use executive powers to pool state purchasing power to negotiate with drug companies to help reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Propose legislation to strengthen that action.
38. Issue an executive order designating “areas of high risk” of the top 30 communities in the state with elevated blood lead levels based on state screening data; and implement poisoning prevention plans. In addition, the order should reduce the blood lead level that triggers intervention.

39. Issue an executive order to require regulated health entities to raise childhood lead poisoning screening rates, enhance promotion of lead screening through public programs and produce annual reports on screening and incidence rates.
40. Issue an executive order creating a Citizens Utility Board, a utility ratepayer advocacy organization.
41. Use executive powers to initiate proceedings before the Public Service Commission to regulate the terms and conditions of cell phone service and urge the PSC to increase oversight of the cell phone industry.
42. Use executive powers to create the Office of Insurance Consumer Advocate to intervene before the Insurance Department on behalf of New York consumers.
43. Issue an executive order requiring that the Insurance Department analyze insurance practices in low-income communities.
44. Use executive powers to require the licensure of non-bank ATMs.
45. Issue an executive order requiring the Banking Department to more aggressively market and monitor low-cost checking accounts.
46. Propose budget measures that reduce the cost of higher education for students and their families.
47. Use executive powers to boost funding for higher education institutions.
48. Use executive powers to reform TAP and financial aid opportunities to ensure they best serve today's students.
49. Propose budget measures to win continued funding of mass transit.
50. Appoint an independent transit professional to head the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.