



North Country Alliance

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2013 NCA Advocacy and Outreach Agenda:

OUR MISSION: The North Country Alliance (NCA) is a private-public consortium of economic development organizations, private businesses, utilities, public and private colleges, the media and financial institutions working to grow the economy of New York's seven-county North Country region. Its role is to offer a single point of access to the resources you need to expand or locate your business in Northern New York. Visit our website at www.northcountryalliance.org.

➤ **THE NCA SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:**

The NCA applauds Governor Cuomo's regional approach to economic development with the creation of the Regional Councils. We embrace the opportunity to develop a vision and strategies based on input from the people and organizations that know their area best. It is now critical to bring key economic development programs, such as the Excelsior Jobs, into compliance with the same spirit of regionalism. NY is a diverse state; hence programs with an "one-size-fits-all" approach are not the best mechanism to affect positive job growth. The NCA urges the Governor and the Legislature to consider the following amendments to such programs:

- ✓ Programs should contain "weighted" regional cost indices that take into account rural and urban areas as they relate to job creation standards and potential economic impacts of projects. The type, size and pay quality of jobs created in rural areas are generally far less than that in metropolitan areas and these should not be considered negatively in determining benefits to new and expanding companies;
- ✓ Establish benchmarks for qualifying businesses to meet that go beyond number of jobs created (annual capital investment, annual training activities, annual facility improvements, facility diversifications, etc.); and
- ✓ Economic impact should be relative to the region where a business is locating. Establish program criteria that take into account the number of jobs created or retained relative to the size of the community, business and unemployment rate.

➤ **THE NCA EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN FOR THE EROSION OF IDA POWERS AND INCREASING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS BEING PLACED ON ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES AND AGENCIES IN NYS:**

Local industrial development agencies and their affiliated development corporations are the drivers to ensure the Governor's and Regional Councils' initiatives are successful. Robust, empowered and integrated local development agencies and corporations are the on-the-ground means for



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implementing, executing and completing the shared objectives of the Governor and Regional Development Councils.

In order to provide the best environment for local, regional and New York State economic development success, the **NCA SUPPORTS** the following:

- ✓ The withdrawal of the Governor's budget provision related to IDAs providing the State Sales Tax to projects they assist. In lieu of this provision, the NCA recommends restoring the Retail Prohibitions that sunset in 2008 with the addition of community development, adaptive reuse and Brownfield Opportunity Area projects to the list of allowed retail exemptions.
- ✓ Restore the IDA power to undertake civic facility projects.
- ✓ Consistent treatment of local development corporations from the various regulatory and legislative entities in New York State government. The Authorities Budget Office treats LDCs as public authorities, imposing significant oversight and reporting requirements which add administrative and financial burdens to the LDCs operations. At the same time, the Comptroller's office has issued an opinion defining LDCs as private entities and preventing them from obtaining administrative services from IDAs. This reduces efficiency, causes unnecessary duplication and limits the ability for New York State communities to provide comprehensive one-stop economic development services through their professionally staffed IDAs.
- ✓ Implement statewide retroactive "save harmless" for IDA/municipal employees in the New York State Local Retirement System who provided services to LDCs. This measure would respond to the Comptroller's opinion #2001-1 that prohibits IDA staff and municipal employees who are also in the NYS Local Retirement System from providing services to an LDC, even when the services are provided subject to a contract and the LDC is an affiliated or subsidiary corporation of the IDA. LDCs across the state are heavily involved in performing key economic development responsibilities for communities and the Regional Councils. Some LDCs administer revolving loan funds. Others issue tax-exempt bonds to finance projects of key non-profit employers. Some hold property turned over by businesses that close a facility. Most are closely connected with IDAs. In many cases, municipalities have asked or directed IDAs to staff LDCs as a shared services model for efficiency and cost control purposes. Without another alternative format, the OSC opinion as it stands just handcuffs our primary economic development sales force from carrying out development functions for their community and regional councils. Protecting the retroactive loss of municipal and IDA employee's NYS retirement eligibility through legislation is critical. (See A.545-Magnarelli and S.1893-Martins.)



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➤ **THE NCA SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES:**

- ✓ Creation of a statewide network of university affiliated or college affiliated and private sector affiliated innovation hot spots in New York state to support start-up companies and those in the early stage of development to promote job creation, entrepreneurship and technology transfer, as well as to provide support services to hot spot tenants, including, but not limited to, business planning, management assistance, financial-packaging, linkages to financing and technology services, and coordination with other sources of assistance. One of these hot spots must be located in the North Country region.
- ✓ Provide special incentives to rural areas that help them retrain dislocated teachers to staff chronically hard-to-fill rural health care positions like registered nurses, physicians assistants, health care data base managers, etc. through dedicated individual training accounts.
- ✓ Provide high-tech/manufacturing job training incentives whereby businesses can access tax credits to help off-set the costs of training the local workforce (including the costs of purchasing equipment for training).

➤ **THE NCA SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING ENERGY PROPOSALS:**

- ✓ The NCA urges the State to continue energy efficiency programs operated by utilities and NYSEERDA, without increasing the current cost of the programs to utility ratepayers;
- ✓ The NCA continues to support the concept of an “Energy Highway” System to Power New York’s Economic Growth and urges the State to make sure that the System does not transfer precious energy resources from upstate New York to other parts of the state and not increase costs to utility ratepayers or taxpayers;
- ✓ The NCA supports the extension of the NY-SUN SOLAR JOBS program at \$150M annually for 10 years to increase solar panel installations for homes and businesses and urges that State investments in Solar Energy not increase costs to utility ratepayers or taxpayers;
- ✓ The NCA supports the creation of the CHARGE-NY PROGRAM to invest in an electric car network to reduce reliance on fossil fuels by installing a statewide network of charging stations and providing charging infrastructure tax credits, as long as it does not increase costs to utility ratepayers or taxpayers ; and
- ✓ The NCA supports the creation of the position of Chairman for Energy Policy and Finance, a cabinet-level position charged with overseeing the state's energy portfolio and coordinating its clean-tech agenda.



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➤ **THE NCA OPPOSES THE FOLLOWING ENERGY PROPOSAL:**

- The NCA opposes the proposed extension of the Temporary State Energy and Utility Service Conservation Assessment, commonly known as the 18a assessment for an additional five years. This temporary assessment, which raises the cost of energy for businesses in the North Country and New York State, is due to expire in March 2014. The expiration of this onerous surcharge will provide necessary reduction in energy cost for North Country businesses, making them more competitive.

➤ **THE NCA SUPPORTS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TAX FREE “TASTE-NY FACILITIES” AROUND THE STATE:**

- The NCA supports the Governor’s proposal to promote NYS locally-grown and produced products as part of the state’s comprehensive tourism strategy. Taste-NY facilities will offer consumers’ an opportunity to purchase made-in-NY products tax-free while at the same time promote the state’s plentiful tourism assets.

➤ **THE NCA SUPPORTS THE EXPANSION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES AS IDENTIFIED IN THE NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL COUNCIL’S STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITY PROJECTS.**

- The NCA understands that access to advanced broadband telecommunication services is an essential infrastructure requirement that is no less important to economic development as gas, electricity, and a highway system. Expanding the fiber optic cable network further out into the communities located in the North Country is an important strategy of the Regional Council. So far, fiber optic build-outs in Franklin, St. Lawrence and Hamilton counties started in the first round of priority projects (2012), and are continuing under the second round of CFA funding (2013). The NCA also supports the initiatives being funded by the CONNECT-NY program.

➤ **THE NCA SUPPORTS THE NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL COUNCIL’S POSITION ON AN EAST-WEST LIMITED ACCESS FEDERAL INTERSTATE HIGHWAY:**

- The North Country is the only geographic area in New York State without relatively easy access (under 35 miles) to a major, limited access federal interstate highway. This situation has created a long-standing economic disparity and loss of business opportunity within the region. While the eastern and western areas of the region are served by north-south access, the lack of a high quality, efficient, right-sized east-west surface transportation corridor is a situation that should be considered further so that a rational approach which addresses the inherent and controversial issues of Connectivity, Smart Growth and Community Development can be fully aired.