

99 New York

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COMMUNITY GROUPS, LABOR LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO STOP HUGE STATE TAX BREAK FOR MILLIONAIRES

Groups Call on Elected Officials to Do the Right Thing and Stop the Planned \$5 Billion Tax Break for Wealthiest New Yorkers

ALBANY, NY – Community groups and labor organizations held a press conference on Monday to launch a renewed campaign to stop the State's planned tax break for millionaires. The organizations, under the banner of 99 New York, called on the Governor and Legislature to do the right thing and stop the \$5 billion tax break that the wealthiest New Yorkers will receive if the supplemental tax rates on the wealthiest New Yorkers expire as planned on December 31st of this year.

Representatives from numerous community and labor groups attended the press conference, including New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness, GrowingTogetherNY, the Strong Economy for All Coalition, Alliance for Quality Education, Citizen Action of NY, 1199 SEIU, NYSUT, the Capital District Area Labor Federation, Save Our SUNY, Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood, Statewide Senior Action Council of NYS, Empire Justice Center, supporters of SNUG, Coalition for the Homeless, and the Fiscal Policy Institute.

To fund this massive tax break for the wealthy, New York State has slashed education funding by \$1.3 billion this year alone. Public sector jobs are being cut across the state and even programs supporting homeless children were cut by 50% in the most recent state budget.

"Since there is such broad support for the millionaires tax from the public we hope the Governor and some of our elected officials will reconsider their 'line in the sand' opposition to its extension," said Ron Deutsch, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness and coordinator of GrowingTogetherNY Coalition. "They are sticking to their mantra that millionaires will flee the state should it continue but they offer no research to support their claims. The reality is that if anyone in this state needs a tax cut it is not millionaires and billionaires it is struggling working class families that are the backbone of our economy."

"New York's approach to its financial woes has focused solely on drastic budget cuts, with little attention paid to increasing revenues," said NYSUT Executive President Andrew Pallotta. "As a result, we've seen deep cuts to vital public services such as education and health care, threatening the futures of our children and the daily lives of the sick and poor. It is simply immoral to force our most vulnerable New Yorkers to shoulder the burden of the state's economic problems, while its wealthiest residents continue to flourish without sharing in the sacrifice the middle-class and poor have repeatedly made."

"Right now 1% of America lives in an ivory tower, insulated from the struggles working people face every day," said the Capital District Area Labor Federation's Kevin Eitzmann. "That ivory tower does not need a new ballroom built on the backs of workers and their families through tax cuts for the rich. Labor stands with the middle class of New York State in demanding the extension of the millionaires tax."

"Taking teachers and educational programs from school children so that a banker who makes a million dollars a year can get a \$20,000 gift from Albany – in the form of a tax break- just doesn't make sense to everyday New Yorkers. Children across the state are relying on Governor Cuomo and the Legislature to restore school funding by extending the Millionaires' Tax to ensure the opportunity to make their dreams come true," said Nikki Jones, Alliance for Quality Education Communications Director.

"Because Albany decided to give millionaires and billionaires a tax break, hard-working families must continue to suffer without the services we need, the education our kids deserve, and the jobs that will get our economy back on track," said Ivette Alfonso, President of Citizen Action of New York. "We aren't asking for corporate CEOs and the big banks to bail us out. We just want them to pay their fair share like we've been doing all along. Governor Cuomo and the Legislature must do what's right for New York's working families by stopping this huge tax break for the rich."

"A budget is not just about numbers, it is a moral and ethical document and we have to ask what it says when those who have the most are not asked share the sacrifice that others of lesser means including older persons on fixed incomes are bearing. That policy inevitably frays the fabric of society," said Maria Alvarez, NY Statewide Senior Action Council.

"Millionaires must pay their fair share in New York State, so we can save programs like SNUG," said Beverly Padgett, on behalf of SNUG in Albany. "SNUG stops gun violence in the City of Albany, but there was no money in the budget to keep it going. That's why we need to extend the tax."

"As the State of NY prepares to hand out a \$5 billion tax cut to millionaires it is simultaneously imposing a 30% tuition increase on SUNY and CUNY students and cutting millions in funding for higher education," said Colin Donnaruma, a leader of Save Our SUNY. "Where is the shared sacrifice? What are our priorities? Why is the Governor siding with millionaires over students?"

"It is little wonder that we face record homelessness in New York when we have record income disparity: Income inequality *causes* homelessness. To give a \$5 billion tax cut to the wealthiest taxpayers in the face of such profound needs and a looming deficit offends the very purpose of government. The surcharge on the highest incomes must be extended for the good of all New Yorkers, especially those without a home," said Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director for Policy with Coalition for the Homeless.

Similar press conferences were held Monday by community and labor organizations in Buffalo and New York City, with more events to follow on Tuesday in Rochester and Long Island.
