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Portland Standard Local News

Seward outlines 2018 legislative agenda

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Fundamental policies such as creating job opportunities and making New York state affordable are the best ways to bring growth to the state, state Sen. James Seward said Friday on a visit to Cortland.

"I believe we have a foundation to build on, which will lead to a more vital county and state," Seward said.

He spoke at the Cortland County Legislature chambers as part of a yearly tour of the district.

One way Seward would like to create economic growth is to eliminate any state regulations and state mandates that are redundant or outdated. Several years ago, a Senate task force led by Republicans identified more than 1,000 business regulations it said were unnecessary, but no follow-up effort was taken to eliminate those.

Seward also opposes a proposed regulation to require employers to pay employees for originally scheduled time if the schedule must change within two weeks.

"It's a burden on employers,"

Seward said. "We need to set up a process so the regulations make sense and not kill jobs."

Seward also wants to conduct a review of the Start-Up NY program, which allows businesses the chance to operate tax-free for 10 years by locating near a college campus.

"The money could be better spent on growth or returned to the taxpayers," Seward said.

Seward's other main agenda item, making New York more affordable to live, started off with talking about a state income tax cut that took effect Jan. 1. It is projected to save 4.4 million residents \$250 each in 2018, and will eventually grow to \$700 annually.

Other measures to make New York more affordable consist of making the 2 percent state budget spending cap part of law; making the property tax levy cap permanent; a 25 percent increase in property tax rebate checks, eliminating the 2 percent gross receipts tax on energy; freezing or eliminating school taxes for senior citizens, saving them \$300 million if eliminated; and doubling the exemption on retirement income to \$40,000 from \$20,000.

Seward wants to focus on improving resources for job training programs, saying a trained workforce is key to economic development.

He also said the state needs a statewide protocol for treating Lyme disease and to target drug kingpins who profit from selling opioids. In 2017, he said, 3,000 people died of opioid overdoses in New York.

County Legislator Sandra Price (D-Virgil, Harford) supported Seward's intent to eliminate state-mandated costs, given that mandates for programs like Medicaid make