

cc: S. Trahern

[REDACTED]
Mt Vernon, NY 10552

3/13/90

Angela P. Hunter

1180-90

C-span

MAR 15 REC'D

Dear Ms. Hunter,

APR 20 ANS'D

Here's another article
I wrote on initiative
legislation for NY.

I hope you give
serious consideration
to the subject as a
possible call in program.

[REDACTED]

New York Voters Must Win Power to Propose Legislation

Gov. Mario Cuomo, in his State of the State message, stated, "If a petition supporting a legislative proposal is signed by 400,000 or more voters they will decide at the next election whether the Legislature should be required to vote on the proposal." This endorsement of initiative and referendum legislation should help New Yorkers get the right, which is guaranteed to them under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, to petition the government.

By limiting this legislation so that it only deals with statutory matters such as crime, taxation, government spending and administration and by avoiding state constitutional issues, opposing parties might be brought together to support this legislation.

It would still be extremely difficult to get initiative legislation out of the judiciary committees in the Senate and Assembly since Senate Majority Leader Ralph

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just to pay taxes.** **”**

Marino and Assembly Speaker Mel Miller oppose it. Alexander Hamilton, who signed the U.S. Constitution as New York's delegate, would have disagreed with them.

At a time when the students, workers, and artists of East Germany, Romania, Lithuania, and Czechoslovakia are marching in the streets for basic freedoms, New Yorkers should have the right to initiate or propose new legislation that would appear on the ballot for voters to accept or reject.

This year in California the voters will have the opportunity to vote on an initiative proposal, the Environmental Protection Act of 1990, which would phase out cancer causing pesticides used on food sold in the state. This ballot proposal, which is already gaining wide support, could never be passed in New York without initiative legislation because of the power of special interest groups in Albany.

With initiative legislation New Yorkers could vote on the need for a Designated Highway Fund so gasoline taxes, tolls, license and registration fees would be allocated specifically to assure modern and safe transportation. Voters could also decide to outlaw the monopolistic dairy farmers co-op, which is not consumer or market oriented, and is a major cause for the rapidly rising milk prices. Citizens could also approve or disapprove the use of BGH, a bio-genetic hormone injected into dairy herds to increase milk production.

When New Yorkers wake up on those cold, dark mornings of January, February and March they realize they are working those months just to pay taxes and, even in two-income households, they can't make ends meet. Meanwhile, the governor is proposing another environmental bond issue for \$1.9 billion, and quasi-governmental agencies such as the MTA, UDC, and the Power Authority issue additional billions of dollars of state-guaranteed bonds.

Albany has an insatiable hunger for New Yorkers' salaries. There is a growing number of two-income households out of necessity, not always out of desire. Many spouses would prefer 'quantity time' with their children; 'quality time' is only a substitute.

The state legislators raise a smokescreen by imposing taxes on corporations which are passed on to the consumer. Otherwise profits would decline, dividends would decrease, and shareholders would sell the stocks in these companies, resulting in employee layoffs.

Gov. Cuomo also wants to repeal the income tax reduction due this year, and he has proposed a new tax, on small, private businesses as well as increased taxes on cigarettes and out-of-state phone calls to offset a \$700 million deficit.

The 1990-91 state budget is expected to grow by 9.3 percent but no attempt is made to curtail the extremely high student loan default rate. Many state guaranteed loans are going to beauty, auto and computer schools that have very high dropout rates. In addition, the symbolically bloated legislators have bloated staffs, and have increased their mailings to voters as the crises continue.

In the movie *Network*, Peter Finch's character, Howard Beal, tells his viewers to yell out the window, "I'm mad

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as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore." It is time for New Yorkers to do even more.

New York legislators expect the voters to be apathetic and cynical, waiting for someone else to do something. Now is the time for young voters and senior citizens to fight for the same cause.

Fight for the passage of initiative legislation. Call the radio talk shows; write letters to newspaper editors and television news producers. Write or call your assemblyman and state senator.

Make initiative and referendum legislation a 1990 election issue. Fight to get the current bills out of the judiciary committees so the legislators can openly vote on the bills. Find out where your legislator stands on initiative and referendum legislation, and ask Gov. Cuomo to remain courageous in his support for it.