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## Coalition lays out opposition to Tax-Free NY

by TIFFANY BROOKS

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Representatives from nine advocacy groups held a press conference in Albany Tuesday to urge legislators to vote no on Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Tax Free New York plan.

The proposal would provide an incentive for businesses to locate on or near SUNY campuses to develop zones of economic development across the state. In return, those businesses and their employees would operate tax free for a number of years.

"It sets up and incredibly uneven playing field for business in New York State," said Ron Duetsch, New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness executive director.

Frank Mauro from the Fiscal Policy Institute presented a report showing how the governor's plan conflicts with the tax fairness pillars of horizontal and vertical equity.

"Horizontal equity requires those who have similar ability to be treated similarly. Vertical equity requires that those with greater ability to pay, pay more," said Mauro.

Mauro added that Tax-Free NY would create a special class of taxpayers exempt from New York state income tax. The plan would also be more costly to the state, opponents of the plan say.

Duetsch was joined by representatives from student groups — the Graduate Student Employee Union, New York Students Rising, and Save our SUNY, who spoke out against Tax Free NY being beneficial to students.

James Searle of the GSEU said that "such trickle down ideas are what got us in trouble in the first place."

"What this crisis demands is a university system committed to much needed critical and imaginative problem solving for the 21 century, a system that doesn't invite the robber barons in with open arms," said Searle.

After the press conference Occupy Albany held a rally at the state Capitol against the tax plan.

"Tax Free NY may make for a great sound bite but it is not sound policy. We only need to look back over the last 30 years to see that "designated tax free zones" have been repeatedly tried in the past



Ron Deutsch, at podium, speaks out against the governor's Tax Free plan to bring businesses to upstate New York calling it a repackaged bad program with a few more bells and whistles. *Photo by Matthew Dondiego.*

and have not worked," said Duetsch.