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Albany stuck on excuses

JOHN BATISTE • GUEST ESSAYIST • FEBRUARY 21, 2010

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Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to participate in the Unshackle Upstate Lobby Day in Albany, as a representative of manufacturing. We conducted sessions and discussions with majority and minority leaders, as well as delegations from Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Binghamton.

Our message to elected officials was simple: Do no harm to taxpayers or the companies that create jobs. Cuts must be made to reduce spending. Public and private sectors must share the pain equally.

Reflecting on the day, I have grave concerns.

Most of our elected officials seem to be incapable or unwilling to make decisions to improve the long-term economic conditions in our great state.

Most are beholden not to you and me, the taxpaying electorate, but to special interest groups that fund their campaigns, often with our tax dollars.

Most are bent on building a strong public sector, at the expense of the private sector. They are stuck on excuses and play a blame-shifting game that raised the hair on the back of my neck.

Most are concerned foremost with getting re-elected, as often as possible. They are dependent on the pay, benefits and pensions of public office and will do what is necessary to stay in office.

For the most part, we continue to elect professional politicians with limited capabilities.

I asked, "Do any of you have the moral courage to do the right thing for the people of New York, even if that would mean your defeat in the next election?" The response was silence, then anger, which grows from the fear of losing a job. It was disgusting. Bottom line, unless and until "we the people" get involved, there will be no change.

What happened to our Forefathers' notion that our elected representatives would selflessly serve one or two terms in Albany, then return to private life? How many elected representatives walk the talk? When will the good and decent people say "enough" and step forward?

We all must understand that the future of our state is at stake. I urge you to go to [www.unshackleupstate.com](#) to get informed and more importantly, engaged. Start asking your elected representatives the tough questions. Hold

them accountable now. Time is of the essence.

Long term, what will be our collective response on Election Day, November 2010?

Batiste is major general, U.S. Army (retired) and president of Klein Steel Service Inc.