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## **Spitzer Offers Broad Plan to Help Upstate Economy**

BUFFALO — Gov. Eliot Spitzer offered details on Wednesday of his proposal to infuse \$1 billion in state funds into upstate cities, farms and parks as a way of revitalizing the regional economy, rescuing it from what he called an economic storm.

He began New York's first-ever State of Upstate address with a story about a snowstorm that paralyzed Oswego County last year and told how he met plow operators, firefighters and ordinary New Yorkers who worked to dig out their neighbors, feed the hungry and help those in distress.

When he offered praise, he said they replied: "That's the way it always is. When there's a storm, everyone pitches in to help."

"The storm we face today is not natural," Mr. Spitzer said in his speech, delivered at Buffalo State College. "It is economic. But if we put that same strength, that same resiliency and that same community-mindedness to work, if we summon the will to work together, we can overcome this storm."

The governor's \$1 billion plan includes \$350 million to promote business development by preparing development-ready sites and industrial parks, financing technology parks and retooling the brownfield cleanup program, which seeks to revitalize contaminated sites.

The governor proposed that \$10 million be used to create a venture capital fund that would provide seed money for 10 to 15 small upstate companies with the potential to expand into major employers. His plan also calls for investing \$50 million in upstate agriculture businesses to improve access to farmers' markets, creating or expanding food processing centers and developing alternative fuels.

He said he would establish a new state post, director of agricultural development, to oversee the fund. Another \$50 million would go to upstate cities to help fight crime and poverty.

Even while facing political problems elsewhere, Mr. Spitzer has made the revitalization of upstate New York a priority of his administration. The region is battling job losses, the continued loss of young people who cannot find work, and violence in some cities.

Mr. Spitzer's aides have suggested that the governor's interest in the area is driven by policy and data, rather than politics. The governor likens his upstate revitalization proposal to the massive infusion of aid to New York City in the early 1970s.

In the plan, which needs legislative approval, Mr. Spitzer proposed taking advantage of the weak American dollar to finance a new international marketing office to entice Canadians to do business in New York. He also called for spending \$5.5 million to restore Niagara Falls State Park; some of that money, he said, would be used to rebuild and reopen the Goat Island Bridge.

Mr. Spitzer said he would create individual development plans for each upstate city, working with mayors, business communities and colleges and universities to jump-start economic growth.

He proposed investing \$100 million to build or rehabilitate 10,000 homes and apartments and sending 200 state troopers to help inner cities fight violent crime. Mr. Spitzer also proposed building crime analysis centers equipped with high-tech tools in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany.

Mayor Byron W. Brown of Buffalo applauded Mr. Spitzer's efforts, especially the anticrime initiatives. "It was a tremendous address," Mr. Brown, a Democrat, said.

But others, especially Republicans, questioned the approach.

"So far, it doesn't add up," said Edmund J. McMahon, director of the Empire Center for New York State Policy, a conservative group. "It suggests that upstate's problems can be solved simply by dumping state dollars on it."

After the speech, Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno issued a statement in which he offered tepid praise. "Governor Spitzer's State of Upstate address shows that he recognizes the importance of strengthening the upstate economy," Mr. Bruno said. "However, upstate New Yorkers are hoping that the governor follows up his speech with real action."

The Monroe County executive, Maggie Brooks, a Republican, called Mr. Spitzer's proposals for upstate "exciting" and aggressive, but she wondered if he was spreading his agenda too thin.

"I congratulate the governor for putting together an agenda that is specific to upstate, but I do think you can try to solve all the problems at once and fail, as opposed to targeting one or two specific initiatives and succeeding," Ms. Brooks said. "I worry about the size of the agenda."