

## **Detroit Economic Club, June 23, 1999 [Excerpted]**

*Gov. George E. Pataki, "What's working in New York can work for America"*

**A** couple weeks ago, Alan Greenspan spoke to the Alliance for the Commonwealth. It was broadcast live on C-Span. And as he walked up to the podium and approached the microphone, the audience sat silently, with bated breath, waiting for him to begin preaching the economic gospel, believing that the first words out of his mouth would tell them everything they needed to know about the world's economy for the next two decades.

*When I approached the podium moments ago, I did not expect to elicit quite that same response...*

*...What we're seeing today -- in the states and in Congress -- are sound economic policies based on the idea that a strong and vibrant economy is built on the foundation of individual freedom. Tax cuts and spending caps at the federal level, combined with the sweeping tax cuts enacted by our nation's governors, have helped to usher in what truly is an era of unprecedented and broadly shared prosperity.*

*And yet, for some, this prosperity seems to have engendered a certain degree of complacency -- a feeling that we can sit back and applaud good times on Wall Street while doing nothing to ensure that our children share in those good times.*

*When the President addressed you earlier this year, he applauded what he called -- quote -- "the longest peacetime expansion in history. As it turned out, the "peace" he spoke of didn't last very long, and I have an uncomfortable feeling that neither will the expansion.*

*The line has frequently been used that we have the "strongest economy in a generation." But the working people who make it strong are still not sharing enough of the rewards.*

*Today, the average American family pays more in taxes than they do on housing, food, and health care -- combined. How can government continue to tax the way it does, grow the way it does, spend the way it does, and still have any hopes of passing this "prosperity" on to our children?*

*Taxes and freedom have an inverse relationship -- the more you have of one the less you have of the other. Every dollar that government confiscates from the person who earned it is an additional burden on the ability of men and women to be the energetic agents of their own destinies.*

*What's needed is across-the-board tax relief for all Americans, while simplifying a federal tax code that's more than twice the length of War and Peace, and not nearly as thoughtful.*

*As former Treasury Secretary William Simon said, we should have a tax system that*

*looks as though someone designed it on purpose.”*

*Six years ago, Al Gore sought to change this on a promise to make government smaller, friendlier, less expensive and more efficient.*

*He calls it reinventing government. The General Accounting Office calls it funny. They call it “unfocused and uncoordinated cross-cutting that confuses and frustrates taxpayers, leaving virtually all wasteful government programs fully intact.”*

*That is a charitable assessment. Let’s not mince words. The federal government is a bastion of waste and inefficiency that taxes working families beyond their means to pay for unnecessary programs that don’t work...*

*...The unnecessary proliferation of federal rules and regulations represents big government at its very worst. Our sacred allegiance to preserving freedom is not consistent with a society ruled by bureaus.*

*A couple years ago, we had a regulation in New York that mandated the precise length and width of the band-aids that day care centers had to keep on the premises.*

*For this rule to work, we would need a second regulation mandating the width and length of the cuts children are allowed to get. Needless to say, the band-aid regulation failed the common sense standard and it’s gone...*

*...Cutting taxes and regulations isn’t simply a matter of numbers or even money. It’s about freedom. It’s about people. It’s about restoring certain inalienable rights that have become a dispensation of government.*

*It’s based on the age-old idea that all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people.*

*The poet Carl Sandburg said: “The Republic is a dream. Nothing happens unless first a dream.”*

*Throughout history, America’s destiny has shaped by the spirit and vision of men and women who are free to pursue their dreams. Government cannot fulfill those dreams. It can only empower people with the freedom to pursue them for themselves.*

*And that is what we must do -- return power and freedom back to the people, with the full confidence that they will use that freedom to lift themselves and America to a brighter future.*

**xxxx**