

Introduction: New York: A Laboratory for Innovative Public Policy

By Scott Fein

Government expresses our desire to operate as a community. Because government is created and implemented by human beings, it embodies our core qualities, fallibility, creativity and the aspiration to excel.

Political cycle after political cycle, our fallibility becomes a refrain...we are told that our State is on the wrong path. Such an assertion merits robust debate, but I would submit that the true measure of our State is whether we reach beyond our traditional approach to age old problems and embrace new and inventive policies in an effort to enhance the community, including those who live at its margins. Some of these new policies work



and others falter, because we are fallible, but New York more than any other State serves as a social laboratory. We do not rest. We develop and road test ideas. We look at hidebound rules that constrain human development and challenge them. We are relentless in the pursuit of social justice. Whether in social services, criminal justice, mental health, or consumer affairs...it has been New York and New Yorkers who have taken the initiative in pushing programmatic frontiers. If Silicon Valley is the home of the wafer, we are the home of the social petri dish. We nourish new policies, refine and export them in ways both pragmatic and dramatic.

In this edition, our authors, experts in their fields, illustrate the State's efforts through invention to serve our fellow New Yorkers better. In so doing, New York influences the national debate and beyond. I thank them for their contribution to this *Journal* and their unrelenting desire to improve governance and our social welfare.

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