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Utica Mayor Michael Galime, seen in this O-D file photo presenting his proposed FY 2027 budget to the Utica Common Council, said that additional state aid contained in Mayor Kathy Hochul's proposed FY 2027 Executive Budget could help to stabilize city finances. DANIEL DELOACH/UTICA OBSERVER-DISPATCH

Hochul proposes more municipal aid

Amy Neff Roth
Utica Observer Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

The City of Utica has gotten some good news for taxpayers that could translate into no property tax increase in the next fiscal year.

The city will get a discretionary funding increase of \$5.61 million from the

state for the fiscal year 2026 budget, Mayor Michael Galime announced, saying he received word of the increase in a personal communication from Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Galime presented his proposed \$93.3 million Fiscal Year 2027 budget earlier this month, which included a 2.9% property tax increase. That works out to an average increase of about \$50 a year,

he said.

The additional state funding, though, is contained in the governor's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget, which has to be passed by the New York State Legislature. That proposed budget contains in increase a funding increase most municipalities in the

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COMMENTARY

Battle for Trump's brain at State of the Union

Midterms or legacy could dominate speech

Susan Page
USA TODAY

The state of President Donald Trump's union is troubled.

When Trump delivers the State of the Union on Feb. 24, the audience in the House chamber will likely include members of a Supreme Court that just outlawed the stiff tariffs that have been his primary economic and national-security cudgel. A key part of his administration has been partially shut down in a ferocious showdown over his aggressive immigration enforcement.

And congressional Republicans, bracing for what now looks like difficult midterm elections, will be watching for which Donald Trump climbs the dais.

Call it a battle for Trump's brain.

Some see the effort to refocus his message on kitchen-table problems – and even to acknowledge that those problems are real – as an existential challenge to their own political futures and the GOP's continued control of Congress in November.

That has not been the president's priority so far.

Since he signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act on July 4, 2025, extending the sweeping tax cuts from his first term, Trump has been less interested in legislation and more interested in legacy. He has been less engaged on the close-to-home issues that were

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Social Security changes may trigger more taxes

Bill is introduced to exclude retroactive payments

Medora Lee
USA TODAY

The Social Security Fairness Act signed at the beginning of 2025 is now unfair, at least when it comes to taxes, according to some representatives in Congress.

The Social Security Fairness Act ended the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, which reduced Social Security benefits for about 3.2 million public-sector retirees who also receive pension income.

The law's effective date was retroactive to January 2024, so many benefi-

ciaries received a one-time retroactive payment last year that may have amounted to thousands of dollars and higher monthly benefits, starting in 2025.

Those income spikes last year likely triggered more taxes for many people, experts said. To address the potential tax bomb, Rep. Lance Gooden, R-Texas, introduced earlier in February the bipartisan No Tax on Restored Benefits Act, which amends the tax code to exclude retroactive Social Security payments tied specifically to those repeals from federal taxable income.

"For hundreds of thousands of Americans, the bipartisan Social Security Fairness Act was truly transformative," Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, co-sponsor of the bill, said in a news release.

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The Social Security Fairness Act's effective date was retroactive to January 2024. GETTY IMAGES

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