

Post Star  
December 11, 2009

## Candidate mulls halting land buys

By MAURY THOMPSON

GLENS FALLS - Republican gubernatorial candidate Rick Lazio said that if elected, he would consider a moratorium on the state buying land in the Adirondack Park.

But there may be other options such as swapping public and private land, he continued.

State Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queensbury, has advocated for a temporary moratorium on land acquisitions until the state's financial position improves.

Asked on Thursday whether he would support a moratorium on land acquisitions, Lazio said he would consider it.

"There are some programs that we may highly value that we may need to re-prioritize and either delay or eliminate. There are no exceptions to what should be on the table," he said at a meeting with The Post-Star editorial board.

"I think that's (a moratorium) on the table, though," he reiterated.

There may be alternatives to a moratorium, however, he said.

"On this issue, I think there's some other smart things we can do, by the way, in terms of land swaps with people that have got development interests where there's other non-environmentally strategic lands or other creative things we can do that would allow us to accomplish our goal without necessarily going out of pocket from a state standpoint," he said.

Contacted later on Thursday, experts on both sides of the Adirondack debate questioned if a land swap would be practical for large land deals.

"I don't know of a 160,000-acre parcel that the state wants to give up inside the park right now, or if there is any comparable piece of land that the state would be interested in swapping," said John Sheehan, a spokesman for the Adirondack Council.

"It doesn't sound feasible for large-large tracts of land," said Little, a state senator.

Little said she was pleased Lazio said he would consider a moratorium.

Sheehan said he was surprised Lazio said he would consider a moratorium, considering the Long Island Republican serves on the board of the National Audubon Society's state chapter.

"Maybe he was caught off-guard and hadn't really thought through the question," Sheehan suggested.

On other topics, Lazio said:

- On requiring prevailing wages be paid on development projects which receive assistance from industrial development authorities: "We're trying to incent more job creation, more economic activity, more construction - put people back to work. I couldn't think of a worse time to be putting more mandates, driving up costs and creating disincentives for more construction. ... "Let the local communities decide those things. If New York City wants it or Long Island wants it, let them have it."

- On labor unions: "On the union front, I get what their purpose is and I guess that the public does too. If you look at polling results most recently, it's not that people dislike organized labor. They just know that they have a narrow interest and they're watching out for their members rather than the public at large. That's their purpose. I'm not angry about that, but that could be and often is in conflict with the greater public purpose of creating a state that has a more positive future. And so I think this is also about appealing directly to the union members."

- On capping property taxes: "I'm for a hard property tax cap. ... I also believe that with that has got to come a very aggressive mandate relief program. I believe that the state, as it seeks to push mandates to local government, that needs to be accompanied by the money to pay for it. If you want to be a hero - pay for it."