

N.Y. ready for its close-up

By **MITCHELL L. MOSS**

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Whenever I watch movies, I always read the long list of names, in tiny print, that scrolls too fast at the end of each film. I don't look at the names of the movie stars, but the sound engineers, camera crews, and carpenters who do all the work behind the scenes. In recent years, television and film production has flourished in New York, while traditional businesses like insurance and manufacturing have been shrinking.

As we have just recently learned, the federal government will do anything to save the "bonus babies" of finance. But when it comes to a growing industry, like film and television, free market types oppose tax credits even when they are successful. This makes absolutely no sense. This is the time to invest in growing industries that can create jobs well into the future.

After New York adopted a 30 percent tax credit for film and television production in 2008, almost 20,000 jobs were retained or created. According to Ernst and Young, for each dollar authorized as a tax credit, the state and New York City generated \$1.90 in tax revenues.

Unlike AIG or Merrill Lynch, these tax credits don't go to people at the top, but help cover the costs of building stage sets, buying props and supplies, and paying for all those truckers who haul the equipment to locations where the actual filming is done.

The impact of television and film production can be felt across the entire Empire State. Plattsburgh benefited when the Oscar-nominated movie, "Frozen River," was filmed there for 24 days in subzero weather. And many of the camera operators and technicians who work in film and television live in New York City suburbs; they pay property, sales and income taxes.

Can New York afford to risk losing these jobs, something that is bound to happen if the state government does not renew the tax credits that attract film production?

We live in an age when there is growing demand for visual media, whether it comes over a hand-held mobile phone, in a movie house or on your television set. This state is thriving when it comes to producing programs for film, cable television, and the Internet that are distributed electronically all over the world. Today, six national broadcast television networks are based in New York as well as 78 cable networks, including HBO and Showtime.

Moreover, the film and television business reinforces lots of other industries. When people around the world see images of New York, whether it's Times Square or Niagara Falls, it helps attract tourists. And anyone who has ever watched a film crew on location knows that movie production crews spend thousands of dollars on food; in fact,

it often seems that the food catering business is a subsidiary of NBC-Universal.

In 1993, only 69 feature films were made in New York City. In 2008, more than 200 feature films were made there. In today's tough economic climate, with layoffs increasing almost every day, we need to keep every job and to support growing, not declining industries.

Let's hope the state Legislature acts before film production moves out of New York to other states, such as Connecticut, Michigan and California, which are all trying to attract film and television production away from New York.

Mitchell L. Moss teaches at New York University.

Local talent

Movies made, or about to be made, in upstate New York:

1. "Frozen River": released in 2008. Filmed in Plattsburgh. Nominated for two Academy Awards.
2. "Taking Woodstock": filmed in 2008 in Columbia County. Directed by Ang Lee, to be released later this year.
3. "Salt": with Angelina Jolie, will be shooting in Albany in April. To be released by SONY Pictures in 2010.
4. "You Can Count on Me": released in 2000. Directed by Kenneth Lonergan, nominated for two Academy Awards. Set in a small Catskill town.