



Assemblyman **JEFFRION L. AUBRY**

Reports to the People

**35TH A.D. • QUEENS COUNTY
SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE**



Dear Constituents,

As the new legislative session commences, the challenges—and opportunities—are clear. Now more than ever, we must come together and focus on making New York stronger and helping families get ahead by increasing opportunities and fairness. Last year, the Assembly Majority was able to accomplish much of our Families First agenda. Now, we must build on that success and deliver more for the people we represent. Included in this newsletter are various pieces of legislation that passed the Assembly and other measures signed into law. I have also included initiatives that the Assembly intends to work on this legislative session.

This year, we renew our commitment to spur on a growing economy, enhance our education system, and seek a more just society. People at all levels of our state must be able to enjoy the benefits of this growing economy. While many in our great state prospered last year, there are still many residents that are hurting—we must continue to be their voice and be vigilant in advancing the causes of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Our State Constitution requires us to provide assistance to those who cannot care for themselves and we must do so by putting effective measures in place that will encourage growth and achievement in all of our citizens and residents.

We accomplished great things for our State last year, but there is much more work to be done. Hardworking men and women across the state have been calling for a meaningful state minimum wage, and as we approach 2018—for NYC—that call will be answered. New Yorkers are calling for an affordable place to live, and a fair chance to climb the ladder of economic opportunity—and we in the Assembly are poised to answer these calls. We must continue the millionaire’s tax—because those at the top should pay their fair share; invest in our schools—because every child deserves a quality education that prepares them for a lifetime of success; and lower taxes even further for working families—so they can afford rising child care, healthcare, college, and housing costs. Through passage of these measures, we will once again prove the strength of the democratic process and we will continue to work to improve the conditions of our communities, cities, and state.

Our District is home to people from all over the world—and our diversity is not just our strength, it contributes to what makes us great. There are many who seek to sow the seeds of division, fear, and intolerance, but we must reject those notions—instead we must embrace a vision of unity and fight for a future that benefits all New Yorkers.

As we enter 2017, it’s important now more than ever that New York leads by example and remains a progressive champion. We’ve led the way on a number of important issues, and I’ll keep fighting to help each and every New Yorker get ahead as the new legislative session kicks off. From helping to create more and better jobs, to giving students an education that sets them up for future success, to keeping dangerous drugs off our streets and helping those struggling with dependency, I’ll always work to keep us moving in the right direction.

Jeffrion L. Aubry
Member of Assembly
35th A.D. Queens County

PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST



Raising New York’s Minimum Wage to \$15 an Hour

The Assembly has long led the fight to raise the minimum wage and ensure that all New Yorkers earn a living wage. In fact, the New York State Assembly is the first and only state house to pass legislation to increase the wage to \$15.

Every New Yorker deserves to make a livable wage, and we’re making progress on that front. Thousands of workers across the state are now bringing home more money because the minimum wage increased on Dec. 31. This helps hardworking families make ends meet. And with more increases taking effect in the coming years, we will continue to lift working families out of poverty.

In New York City, the minimum wage increased to \$11.00 per hour and will go up in \$2.00 increments each year until it hits \$15.00 in 2018. For New York City businesses with 10 or fewer employees, the minimum wage increased to \$10.50 on Dec. 31 and will continue to increase \$1.50 each year. It is scheduled to reach \$15.00 in 2019. For Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties, the minimum wage rose to \$10.00 on Dec. 31. It will increase \$1.00 each year to reach \$15.00 per hour in 2021.

Upstate, the minimum wage increased to \$9.70 per hour. It is scheduled to increase 70 cents per year and reach \$12.50 in 2020. The minimum wage could be increased to \$15.00 according to an indexed schedule set by the state Division of Budget and Department of Labor. Annual studies will be conducted by the Division of Budget starting in 2019 to gauge economic impact and determine if a temporary suspension of the wage increases is warranted.

Extended Earned Income Tax Credit

I’m committed to making life more affordable for New Yorkers. That’s why I helped permanently extend the Earned Income Tax Credit for noncustodial parents who are current on their child support payments and meet the income threshold for a single taxpayer without children (Ch. 60 of 2016). In addition, homeowners are now eligible for a reduction in their homeowner’s insurance premiums upon completing a natural disaster preparedness, home safety, and loss prevention course (Ch. 54 of 2016). I’ll keep working to keep more of your hard-earned money right where it belongs—in your pocket.

Expanding Access to Child Care for Working Families

For countless families, access to child care is out of reach. This makes it all the more difficult to find and keep employment. Quality, affordable child care is essential for working parents whose children have not begun school.

Last year, the Assembly passed a series of bills to expand access to child care for working families, including a measure that would require local social services districts to provide a child care subsidy for parents who work overnight and have children that are not yet in school, so that children can be cared for during the day.

Child care is a basic need for many families. For a large number of working parents, not having access to child care often means they cannot work and cannot put food on the table. Providing these families with child care assistance allows struggling parents who work overnight to keep their jobs while knowing their children are being cared for.

The series of bills also includes measures that would:

- Codify child care as a compelling family reason to separate from employment, allowing otherwise eligible parents to apply for unemployment benefits (Lupardo);
- Allow a 12-month work exemption for households receiving public assistance with a child under the age of one, provided that the commissioner of a social services district is unable to provide all eligible working families with child care assistance (Titus); and
- Require the state Department of Labor to take child care needs into account when considering unemployment work search requirements (Solages).

While these bills were not signed into law last year, we will continue to fight for their passage this legislative session.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Indigent Legal Services

Earlier this year, both houses unanimously passed an important measure that would take over full funding from the counties for indigent legal services—Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed this legislation. We will continue working to ensure it becomes law because our most vulnerable New Yorkers deserve fair, equal representation under the law, and our county governments should no longer be burdened with this unfunded mandate.

Hate Crimes Task Force

In the days following the Election, there has been an uptick in hate crimes and acts of discrimination across the country. In fact, the day after the Election, a swastika and the words “make America white again” appeared, spray painted on a softball dugout in Wellsville—in our state of New York. This sort of behavior will not be tolerated—my Assembly colleagues and I discussed the urgency to create a hate crimes task force, because now more than ever we must be doing all we can to make sure each and every New Yorker is protected against bias, intolerance, and violence.

Raise the Age

Last year, we did not reach an agreement on Raise the Age, but the Assembly has not lost its resolve on making this proposal a reality.

New York is the only state other than North Carolina that prosecutes ALL youth as adults when they’ve reached 16 years of age. New York fails to recognize adolescents as children, and continues to prosecute and place them in the adult criminal justice system which is not in their best interest nor does it improve public safety. Last session, both the Assembly and the Governor pushed for a comprehensive approach to raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18—an approach that was established by the Commission on Youth, Public Safety, and Justice. However because of the Senate’s failure to act, a bipartisan agreement on Raising the Age remains elusive.

Being processed as an adult can permanently damage the futures of thousands of young New Yorkers, whether they are found guilty or not. And until our Senate colleagues decide to move in the direction of progress, the futures of thousands of teenagers being churned through the criminal justice system will be adversely affected. New York will continue to be one of two states in the country to prosecute 16 and 17 year olds as adults.

Speedy Trial Reform

Kalief Browder’s case is one of the most egregious violations of an individual’s constitutional and civil rights that I’ve witnessed in my years of public service. No person should be deprived of their freedom without due process. No person should sit in jail for three years before receiving a trial—this is unconscionable. New



York State failed this young man and it will continue to fail the thousands of inmates currently incarcerated without a trial unless the Legislature acts.

The tragedy of Kalief Browder must never happen again and it is no longer enough to offer condolences when a life is lost as a result of the inadequacies in the system, we must offer a solution that addresses the issue head on. This is why last year I, along with my Senate colleague Senator Squadron, introduced Kalief’s Law. Kalief’s Law would limit delays by prosecutors and the court so that defendants are afforded their constitutional right to a speedy trial. Integrity in the judicial and legal process must be restored and this is how we must do it.

Important Criminal Justice Reforms

I, along with my Assembly colleagues, intend to push for the following Criminal Justice measures this session:

- Grand jury reform;
- Wrongful conviction reforms;
- Eliminating barriers to employment including banning the box and sealing certain records;
- The basic right to a speedy trial;
- Independent oversight of inmate complaints; and
- Prison system reforms including reduced use of solitary confinement.

We have passed measures that would prohibit racial profiling by law enforcement. We have also backed efforts to ensure accountability in the investigation of fatal encounters between civilians and law enforcement. We will renew our push for bail reforms that will not unfairly punish those from low-income families. We must continue to invest in alternative to incarceration programs and support a robust re-entry initiative that will reduce recidivism.

By eliminating barriers to housing, higher education, and employment, we can improve the prospects of past offenders so they are not set up for failure upon release.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Combating the Heroin Epidemic

We also continued to make important progress in combating the devastating heroin epidemic, which has destroyed thousands of families across New York. I helped pass a law to reduce the stigma of medication-assisted treatment for those with a substance abuse disorder. Credentialed alcoholism and substance abuse counselors are now required to complete training in medication-assisted treatment as part of their continuing education requirements (Ch. 493 of 2016). This year's state budget provided \$26 million to strengthen prevention and treatment programs and safely dispose of pharmaceuticals.

Moreover, individuals struggling with substance abuse disorders will no longer need prior approval from insurance companies in order to access inpatient drug treatment services (Ch. 71 of 2016). Insurers will also cover an emergency five-day supply of medication to help overcome their disease without prior approval, as well as medications to treat drug overdoses (Ch. 69 of 2016). Heroin and opioids have taken

far too many lives, and New Yorkers deserve to be aware of and have more treatment options available to them.

Access to Breast Cancer Screenings

It's also important to be proactive when it comes to protecting our health, which is why New York expanded access to breast cancer screenings. Early detection of breast cancer can save lives. Starting this year, insurance companies can no longer require New Yorkers to pay annual deductibles, co-payments, and co-insurance payments for screening and diagnostic imaging for the detection of breast cancer (Ch. 74 of 2016). This includes diagnostic mammograms, breast ultrasounds, and MRIs. In addition, more hospitals and clinics are now required to offer extended hours to make it easier for women who work full time to get potentially life-saving screenings. New York City employees also now have the right to four hours of paid leave per year for breast cancer screenings.

EDUCATION

Education and Common Core

The Assembly Majority has always been an outspoken advocate for education policies that put the needs of our students first. There is no question that we have a duty to educate our children and ensure their ability to compete in their future collegiate and professional pursuits. We must continue to work with the Governor and our Senate colleagues, as well as all of our partners in education including new SED Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, the Board of Regents, teachers, and parents to improve the implementation of these standards.

Investing in Our Public Schools

The Assembly Majority believes that there is no investment worth more than education, which is an investment in our future business leaders, healthcare professionals, educators, and innovators. And by funding our schools, we are providing much-needed relief to our property taxpayers. Because of our efforts, we have secured historic funding levels for our public schools, ended the gap elimination adjustment, and provided additional support for struggling schools. This year, we will advance the goals of the campaign for fiscal equity by setting a timetable to FULLY phase in foundation aid.

My Brother's Keeper

New York became the first state to enact President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative. This strategic plan will streamline our efforts to improve outcomes for young men of color who have every bit of promise and aptitude to succeed alongside their peers. So far, we have opened up millions of dollars in grant opportunities to increase diversity among those pursuing careers in teaching and to encourage school districts to develop cradle-to-career strategies that best meet their needs.

The Continued Push for the DREAM Act

Our promise to support the Dreamers in our state has never meant more than it does today. We will proudly take up legislation to give these deserving young people the support they need to fulfill their American Dream. Let this be the year that we finally pass INTO LAW a Dream Act so that ALL our students have a chance to succeed.



Making College Affordable

Governor Cuomo recently announced an ambitious plan to eliminate tuition for many students at public colleges and universities. I am encouraged that the Governor is making this a priority, and we look forward to working with him and the Senate to help make this a reality. Let us strive to make New York the gold standard for high quality, affordable public education.

HOUSING

Assembly Continues Fight for Increased Supportive Housing

In New York City alone, 60,000 New Yorkers—including 25,000 children—sleep in homeless shelters each night. Thousands more sleep on the streets. Since May 2006, when there were 31,350 individuals staying in shelters each night, the homeless shelter census has risen by 93 percent. It is estimated that the unmet annual need for supportive housing is 24,100 units.

Supportive housing has been shown to dramatically reduce homelessness. It is especially helpful for people living with disabilities and chronic health conditions and for those leaving foster care, shelters, psychiatric facilities, and addiction treatment programs. Within the first year, detoxification visits decreased by 82 percent, emergency room use decreased by 58 percent, and hospitalizations decreased by 57 percent.

Days spent incarcerated decreased by as much as a week. Not only does supportive housing help fight chronic homelessness, it also lowers public costs and helps neighborhoods. Public costs for each homeless individual moving into supportive housing dropped by \$10,100 on average, after taking into account housing and service costs. When homeless patients were transferred from hospitals to supportive housing, taxpayers' costs were reduced by near \$47,000 per patient.

HEAP is Here to Help With Heating Bills

New York is notorious for its harsh winter weather, making cold weather preparation and protection essential to surviving these months. One serious concern that many working families and

seniors face in winter is higher heating bills. In fact, some must make the awful choice between turning on the heat or putting food on the table. Fortunately, the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) can help. More than 1.4 million households received HEAP benefits in 2015. This year, eligible households can receive up to \$626 in assistance, depending on household size, income, and heating source.

HEAP, a federally funded program, provides financial assistance to both renters and homeowners and can be used to help cover the costs of electricity, propane, natural gas, wood, oil, kerosene, coal, or other heating fuels. You may also be able to get funds to help pay for home heating repairs if necessary.

You can learn more and apply by visiting mybenefits.ny.gov. You can also call 1-800-342-3009. For more information regarding HEAP benefits in New York City, visit nyc.gov/html/hra/html/services/energy.shtml, or call 1-800-692-0557.

Emergency Declaration Regarding Homelessness During Inclement Winter Weather

Last year, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo issued an Executive Order to protect homeless individuals from inclement winter weather where temperatures decline to 32 degrees or below. The order ensured that homeless individuals are directed to shelter during inclement winter weather which can cause hypothermia, serious injury, and death. It also requires homeless shelters to extend their hours of operations so that those without shelter can remain indoors. The state will assist local social services districts if they are lacking facilities, resources, or expertise.



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