



Assemblymember  
**Jo Anne Simon**

52nd District



**April 2017**

**A Message from Jo Anne...**

This month, the Assembly passed a \$153.1 billion 2017-18 state budget that included critical initiatives to move New York forward. The budget increases education funding, funds a groundbreaking free tuition plan to help students attend our CUNY and SUNY schools, Raises the Age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18, and makes a commitment to ensuring that every New Yorker has clean drinking water.

Despite the significant progress made in this year's budget, there were some missed opportunities and crucial issues that I fought hard for on behalf of my constituents that were not in the final budget. The budget is a negotiation between the Governor and members of the Assembly and Senate who have different values and viewpoints, and this year was no exception. The state budget deadline was April 1<sup>st</sup>, and the Legislature was compelled to pass budget extenders last week in order to keep the government open because disagreements over issues such as how to raise the age, education funding, and affordable housing delayed an agreement. There were also concerns over how the looming federal budget cuts might impact New York.

While the Legislature did its job and finalized a budget for New Yorkers, I would have liked the final budget to include much-needed voting reforms, ethics reforms such as closing the LLC loophole, funding for the Campaign for Fiscal Equity's court order, and funding for a firearms research institute. I am also disappointed that we were not able to get design-build authorized for the reconstruction of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway Triple Cantilever - a small but dangerously corroding and critical link in the Interstate Highway system that runs from Atlantic Avenue around Brooklyn Heights to Sands Street, and which significantly impacts the entire region's economy. I hope we will be able to do this post-budget.

Below are key budget highlights and a spotlight on Raise the Age. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with questions. You may see my remarks on the budget on my Assembly webpage at <http://nyassembly.gov/mem/Jo-Anne-Simon/video/>

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## SPOTLIGHT: RAISE THE AGE

Raising the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 is truly a great moment for New York. We finally joined 48 other states in treating kids who encounter New York's criminal justice system as kids and stopped engaging in the fantasy that they are adults. This measure ensures young people are treated fairly and given a better chance to turn their lives around when they make mistakes.

The bill is both responsible and humane. New York will no longer prosecute 16- and 17-year old defendants in nonviolent cases as adults in Criminal Court, but rather misdemeanor charges will be handled in Family Court, felony charges will begin in a newly established Youth Part of the Criminal Court with a chance to be sent to Family Court depending on the case, and nonviolent felony charges will be transferred to Family Court. In October of 2018, the law will prohibit imprisoning young people under 17 in county jails, and in October of 2019, this will apply to people under 18. Those who committed certain nonviolent offenses will also have an opportunity to have their records sealed after 10 years.

No longer will children be sacrificed to a soul-crushing, byzantine system dooming them to a life scarred by a criminal conviction for what are too often stupid, impulsive teen-aged mistakes, including some non-violent actions that have come under the broad category of "violent" for sentencing purposes. For example, when I was growing up, the kids in my old neighborhood broke into houses to eat potato chips and ice cream, but under the penal law, their burglary would be considered a violent felony. This activity, though ill-advised, clearly does not warrant the severity of incarceration as an adult or the life-long "scarlet letter" of an adult criminal conviction which can destroy a person's ability to secure housing, employment and lead an independent life.

Thanks to the advocates, Speaker Carl Heastie and Assemblymember Joe Lentol, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, other champions for the bill Assemblymembers Jeffrion Aubrey, Phil Ramos, Helene Weinstein, and all of my Assembly colleagues who fought so hard to secure its passage.

## 2017-18 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

**EDUCATION:** This budget included a much-needed increase in our education funding by \$1 billion for a total of \$25.7 billion, a 4.1% increase from last year, reaffirming the Assembly Majority's commitment to putting every student on their path to success. The budget also increases Foundation Aid by \$700 million for a total of \$17.2 billion.

I would have liked the budget to fulfill the state's financial obligation to schools per the court ordered mandate in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision, but we made progress and rejected aspects of the Executive's proposed budget that would have eliminated the Foundation Aid formula entirely.

**HIGHER EDUCATION:** The budget establishes the Excelsior Scholarship, a ground-breaking initiative to make CUNY and SUNY schools tuition-free for New Yorkers who earn less than \$125,000 annually. Students who attend a private college in New York and who earn less than \$125,000 annually would also be eligible for a scholarship award of \$6,000. While the Excelsior program is demanding (students must take 30 credits per year and remain in NYS for 4 years after graduation or their grant becomes a loan), the Assembly fought to ensure that students whose disabilities precluded them from taking 30 credits a year were not excluded. In cases with unanticipated factors such as illness, students will be able to seek a hardship waiver.

Nevertheless, much work remains to adequately serve the needs of New York's students. As chair of the Subcommittee on Tuition Assistance, I am committed to improving our ability to provide the

help our students need, including funding for textbooks and transportation. Many of our students must interrupt their studies or take fewer credits because they have to work and support their families and they need more flexible tuition assistance policies. I am also alarmed by the increasing numbers of students who are hungry and/or homeless.

**LEGAL SERVICES:** I am proud that New York is leading the way as it becomes the first in the nation to provide lawyers for all immigrants detained and facing deportation. The Assembly fought hard for this initiative.

**WATER & ENVIRONMENT:** The budget provides \$2.5 billion for water infrastructure to help ensure clean drinking water. This includes \$200 million for drinking and wastewater infrastructure improvements in New York City's watershed. The budget also includes a \$300 million investment in the Environmental Protection Fund and \$23 million for clean energy tax credits. While this is progress, we still have more to do so that New York leads on the environment for the sake of future generations.

**DIRECT CARE PROFESSIONALS:** Workers who devote their lives to taking caring of individuals with developmental disabilities will receive a desperately needed wage hike commensurate with the important work they do. We need to do more to support direct care workers providing services outside the OPWDD context.

**HOUSING:** I am very pleased with the \$2.5 billion for affordable housing and to combat homelessness, including \$1 billion in supportive housing. However, I am very concerned about the authorization of a new version of the 421-a real estate tax abatement which I believe will not and cannot provide the affordable housing it promises. In the past, this tax abatement has been shown to be more beneficial for developers and the creation of luxury housing while doing less to actually create the amount of housing at the level of affordability which we so desperately need. Fortunately, the Assembly defeated a push by the Senate to make luxury condominiums eligible for tax breaks.

**RIDE-HAILING:** The state budget allows ride-hailing services to operate throughout the state. I understand the pressing need for communities outside of NYC to access ride sharing, but I continue to have two main concerns: the lack of disability-particularly wheelchair-access to the service; and the fact that the very business model of these companies is, in my opinion, an evasion of our state's labor laws.

**FAIR SHARE:** To ensure the wealthiest pay their fair share, the 2017-18 budget extends the state millionaires' tax for two years. Revenue from the tax, which was set to expire this year, is crucial to funding important services and programs throughout the state, including public education and infrastructure. The Assembly had supported expanding this tax to bring in needed revenue, but we were unable to secure this in the final budget. The budget also implements previously approved middle-class income tax cuts and also enhances the child care and dependent tax credit for working parents.

**SENIOR SERVICES:** The Executive budget proposed moving Title XX funds from senior centers to child care subsidies. While child care is an area of great need, this move would have forced 65 senior centers in NYC to close! This was unacceptable and we were able to restore the funds for senior centers in the final budget.

**TRANSIT:** The Assembly secured \$65 million for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Capital Plan to help accommodate more passengers and improve efficiency. This funding is a full restoration of the amount cut by the executive's proposal from the MTA's operations budget.

**Last, but not least,** I am grateful to our Assembly staff for their extraordinarily skilled and hard work these past weeks.

## Dyslexia Awareness Day

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dyslexia Awareness Day was a great success. I was thrilled to kick off the event in Albany with Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee and Senator John Brooks speaking in support of the Dyslexia bill that I sponsor (A.1480/S.2534).

Senator Brooks, who is himself dyslexic, spoke movingly of his experience growing up at a time when special education laws had not yet been passed and not knowing until he was in college why he had such difficulty reading. He said, "There's a teacher out there right now who is dealing with a student struggling to read, has problems with spelling, and doesn't want to read out loud in a classroom and breaks into a sweat. But that student who is having trouble might be the next Albert Einstein, or Thomas Edison, or George Washington, or Andrew Jackson, or Woodrow Wilson or Nelson Rockefeller."

Attendees received an overview of the science behind Dyslexia by experts Amy Margolis, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medical Psychology, Columbia University Medical Center, Director of Neuropsychology, Brooklyn Learning Center, and Carolyn Strom, PhD, Visiting Professor of Education at NYU. They did a truly excellent job of making brain research, clinical practice and the cognitive underpinnings of reading instruction understandable.

A panel of individuals spoke eloquently about their experiences living and succeeding with Dyslexia. They imparted important advice derived from their experiences with Dyslexia:

*Senator David Carlucci, "You can do whatever you put your mind to. You have to be your own best advocate."*

*Skye Lucas, a Windward Alum who will be attending the University of Pennsylvania in the fall, "Find an environment where you can really thrive. For me, that's where my intelligence is valued. It was where my teachers saw me for my character and not my scores. So, be confident!"*

*Assemblymember Bobby Carroll, "Your kids can be fluid readers and writers. Your children can master those things with hard work. It's such an essential skill. This is something you will overcome and it will be a strength."*

*James Green, an 11<sup>th</sup> grade student attending the Kildonan school, "Never be scared to ask the simple question – will you help me? Because someone will help. And, use flash cards!"*

We closed out the day with a resolution proclaiming April 4<sup>th</sup> Dyslexia Awareness Day in New York State. I am grateful to everyone who attended and helped to increase awareness of Dyslexia and build support for Dyslexia legislation.

## POLICY SPOTLIGHT

**Assembly Passes Equal Pay Legislation:** This month, the Assembly passed legislation to ensure that women earn equal pay for equal work. The package of bills coincided with Equal Pay Day, April 4, which represents just how far into the year women must work to earn to same amount their male counterparts made during the previous year. The wage gap hurts women and it hurts their families. I cannot believe that in 2017, we are still continuing to allow women to be treated so unfairly. It goes against everything that we value here in New York – equality, opportunity and a fair shot at success.

Women across the country only earn 80 cents for every dollar a man earns. The situation is more unjust for African-American and Hispanic women, who earn 63 cents and 54 cents respectively, for each dollar

their white male counterpart earns. The pay gap costs women hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of their lifetimes.

While there are laws against wage discrimination, they do not go far enough. To ensure that women have greater protections under the law, the Assembly's legislation includes the New York State Fair Pay Act to address and enforce pay equity (A4696). The Assembly also passed legislation that would implement a state policy of wage equality for state and municipal employees and direct the Civil Service Commission to study and report on wage disparities among public employees (A658, A2549). Lastly, the package included a measure to ensure that the state complies with the federal Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and gives public employees a private right of action to sue for compensation and enforce equal pay disparities (A2425).

## SAVE THE DATES!

**March for Science: Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**, 10:30am on Central Park West at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Where would we be without science? From energy to electricity, computers to cell phones, hamburgers to hot sauce, birth to death, our lives would be immeasurably different without the exploration of and respect for science. Let's march together and show the world we believe in science.

**Downtown Brooklyn Partnership's Outdoor Entertainment Series: Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**  
Join them on Albee Square (corner of Fulton and Bond), on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 11am-1pm, for the first of their Block Parties. Check out Grammy winner Tim Kubart's family-friendly tunes, face-painting, double-dutch, balloon animals and your chance to win giveaways from Downtown Brooklyn's wonderful local stores and restaurants. For more details, call 718-403-1600 or visit [www.downtownbrooklyn.com](http://www.downtownbrooklyn.com)

**People's Climate March: Saturday, April 29, 2017**, 11am in Washington, DC  
Following on the heels of the immensely powerful People's Climate March on September 21, 2014 which brought world-wide attention to the intersection of climate change and climate justice, on April 29<sup>th</sup> people will again march for climate, jobs and justice in Washington, DC.

**Affordable Housing Workshop for Artists: Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
I am excited to once again co-sponsor this Affordable Housing Workshop, which is hosted by the Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, along with the Actors Fund as part of their Culture Forward initiative. The workshop will be held on Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, from 6pm-9pm, in the Community Room at Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon Street. To register, please contact Downtown Brooklyn Partnership at 718-403-1600 or visit <http://bit.ly/artisthousingmay9>

**Park Slope Town Hall: Trump and the Budget, Wednesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
I am pleased to co-sponsor this town hall, which is hosted by NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer and Assemblymember Robert Carroll. The town hall will focus on concerns over the President's budget proposals and how it could impact our communities, and the city and state budget. The event will take place on Wednesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm, at John Jay High School, 237 7<sup>th</sup> Ave (between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street), Brooklyn. To register, email [action@comptroller.nyc.gov](mailto:action@comptroller.nyc.gov) or call 212-669-3916.

**Senior Resource Fair: Friday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
Please join me for my annual senior resource fair, Friday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, from 11am - 2pm at St. Francis College, 180 Remsen Street, Brooklyn Heights (between Court and Clinton Streets). The town hall starts at 12:00 noon. A variety of groups will be available to provide you information on legal services, health care, government services, community resources, and more! Admission is free and no registration is required. Additional details will be available soon.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Affordable Housing Opportunity in Brooklyn:** Shore Hill Housing Associates is now accepting applications for Shore Hill Apartments, 9000 Shore Road, Brooklyn, NY 11209. This is a Mitchell-Lama senior development supervised by New York State Homes and Community Renewal. It is opening its Studio Waiting List for 450 applicants, to be selected by a lottery. Maximum occupancy is one person. Applicants must be 62 years of age and over, with a limited income based on the household size. If selected in the lottery, qualified veterans, who served during time of war and reside in New York State, or their surviving spouses, will be afforded an admission preference. All other applications will be processed in order of selection. Qualifications will be based on HUD Section 8 and IRS 42 Tax Credit Program guidelines.

Interested persons may obtain an application by writing to Shore Hill Housing and including a stamped, self-addressed envelope, no smaller than 9 by 4 inches, by regular mail to: Shore Hill Housing Associates, LP, 9000 Shore Road, Brooklyn, NY 11209, Attn: Management Office/Application.

Completed applications must be sent by regular mail to the post office box stated on the application (no certified, priority, registered, overnight or express mail will be accepted). Application must be mailed in a White #10 business size envelope (4 1/8" x 9 1/2"). Completed applications must be received by the deadline date of April 27, 2017 at 11am. Applications received after the deadline date will be returned. If more than one application is received, the applicant will be disqualified.

For additional information on the above opportunity, please contact Shore Hill at 718-745-4730.

For other affordable housing opportunities, go to NYC's Housing Connect website: [www.nyc.gov/housingconnect](http://www.nyc.gov/housingconnect). This is a service provided by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Housing Development Corporation. You may also contact HPD by calling 311 or visiting their website: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/renters/find-housing.page>

## ORGANIC COMPOST COLLECTION

### **Enroll in DSNY's Organics Collection Service**

Join NYC Department of Sanitation's expanded curbside organics program! Food scraps, soiled paper, and yard waste can now be turned into compost and clean energy, enriching our environment and reducing waste sent to costly landfills.

Most residents living in buildings with 1-9 units will automatically be enrolled in the program, as DSNY expands across NYC. If your building is currently eligible and you have not received a special rodent-resistant brown bin, you can request one from DSNY. If you live in an apartment building (10+ units) OR along a commercial block, are a non-profit or city agency, your building may be eligible but you must contact DSNY to enroll. DSNY works with buildings to develop a site-specific plan and provide technical assistance.

This service is currently available in Community Board 6 neighborhoods, and is coming to Community Board 2 on June 5, 2017. To request brown bins or to view the service map, visit <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/dsny/index.page> or contact DSNY at 646-885-4503.

## NYC FERRY UPDATE

**The new ferry boats are here!** The NYC Development Corporation announced that the NYC Ferry service will soon be available to transport New Yorkers to work, school, and to explore the waterfront. The cost per ride will equal that of a single subway ride.

The South Brooklyn route launches in June and will connect Bay Ridge, Brooklyn Army Terminal, Red Hook, Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier 1 and Pier 6, and Wall Street, with weekend service to Governors Island. Some routes start operating May 1. For the full list of all routes and timetables, see the newly released 2017 NYC Ferry map: <https://www.ferry.nyc/>

Starting April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, there will be a new mobile application that you can use to purchase tickets.

## WE SUPPORT OUR NEIGHBORS

### Poster Campaign: We Support Our Neighbors

The "We Support Our Neighbors" poster campaign is a simple way that neighbors can demonstrate our opposition to divisive federal immigration policies and show our support for all members of our communities. As neighborhoods which have been home to Arab and Middle Eastern communities for many decades, we have deep appreciation and concern for our neighbors. At the same time, we have the freedom, and one might argue the greater obligation, to stand up for the broader community.

The poster campaign was conceived by Brooklyn Heights resident Quinn Raymond and is a collaboration between myself, local elected officials, and community groups, including United Neighborhood Houses, and the Arab-American Family Support Center.

The green poster displays this message, "We Support Our Neighbors" in English and Arabic, and shows the Brooklyn Bridge in the background. My district office has the posters available at 341 Smith Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231. Please consider hanging one in your home or store window.

## TAKE ACTION NYC

Take Action NYC provides a centralized event and civic action calendar, as well as listings of groups, resources, and news sources related to activism. This volunteer project encourages New Yorkers to get involved in the fight for social and economic justice.

Here are a few timely events to mark Earth Day and climate change events:

- **March for Science**, Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 at 10:30am on Central Park West at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street
- **Earth Day Rally**, Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 at 12noon in Foley Square, Manhattan
- **People's Climate March**, Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 11am in Washington, DC

For more information and a full list of upcoming events, visit [takeactionnyc.com](http://takeactionnyc.com).

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District Office: 341 Smith Street | Brooklyn, NY 11231 | 718-246-4889 | Fax: 718-246 4895  
Albany Office: LOB, Room 326 | Albany, NY 12247 | 518-455-5426 | Fax: 518-455 4787  
Email: [simonj@NYassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@NYassembly.gov) | Web: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Jo-Anne-Simon>

Sign up for my email alerts! Email [simonj@NYassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@NYassembly.gov) or go to my Assembly webpage.