



A message from
 Assemblywoman
**SANDY
 GALEF**

*Legislative Session
 Wrap-Up*

SUMMER 2012

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Dear Constituent,

We have accomplished a great deal in the 2011-12 state legislative session in Albany. Many of the issues you have been talking to me about, we acted upon. The Assembly, Senate and the Governor have put New York back on track, even in this challenging economy.

Some of our most significant accomplishments work to reduce taxes. Now we have a property tax cap, an income tax reduction back to the lowest tax rate in 58 years for 99% of all filers, a rollback of the MTA payroll tax, and a sales tax exemption of 4% on all clothing and footwear under \$110. Additionally, we were able to provide increased state aid to libraries, and over \$800 million or an additional 4% in state aid to school districts, also helping to reduce property taxes.

We passed mandate relief. This session we adopted a new pension tier, Tier VI, which requires newly hired employees to contribute to their pension funds. The state also took over from the counties the cost of paying Medicaid administrative costs, another costly mandate which is being lifted from county governments. In other smaller mandate relief achievements, we were able to change some requirements that have kept BOCES from offering greater cost savings. Now they can collect fees from other states for programs and services they offer. They may also share services now with libraries. Also, libraries may now merge without losing state aid. All of these initiatives will lower costs for New Yorkers.

Additionally, the New York Works program will expedite the repair of roads and bridges to make sure our infrastructure is protected and improved and more jobs are available in-state. Also, we maintained the Environmental Protection Fund monies in the budget to ensure that we can properly maintain our parks while providing employment opportunities.

On some of the softer but also important issues, we have made gains this session as well. I was very upset to learn of the comparatively low number of organ donors in New York, with so many in need. Now, we have a new law which will help us increase organ donors by asking people to actively decide whether they will be an organ donor when they are getting their drivers' licenses. We have also made it easier for our veterans, those who have spent their lives defending our country, to gain benefits offered only to veterans by issuing a driver's license which would indicate right on it that they are a veteran. Additionally we have disallowed smoking within 100 feet of our elementary and secondary schools.

We expanded the DNA Databank to better solve crimes while protecting the innocent who are falsely accused. We cracked down on domestic violence, approving tougher laws for repeat offenders. We also set up the Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs to overhaul treatment of our most vulnerable who are in care that is overseen or operated by the state.

Some government reforms and voting issues that are close to my heart also gained traction this session. We were able to get first passage of three constitutional amendments, two of which are my reform initiatives—getting all the paper from legislative bills off of our desks in the Assembly Chamber and having them instead available electronically; and setting up a true independent redistricting commission to remove partisan politics from the drawing of legislative district lines. See inside this newsletter for a more comprehensive list and description of our passed and adopted legislation.

I think you will agree with me that we have really made great gains in so many important areas these past two years. Thank you for continuing to share your opinions with me which help guide my decisions in Albany.

In this newsletter, I have included the results from my most recent questionnaire, as well as some of the legislation that responds to your perspectives on these important issues. I look forward to speaking with you further about these and other issues as we see one another around town throughout my Assembly District.

Sincerely,



The NYS Commissioner of Taxation and Finance, Thomas Mattox joined me in my district in June. Income tax rates will be reduced to the lowest rate in 58 years for 99% of filers.

2011-12 Legislative Highlights

Unless specifically noted, these bills have passed both houses of the legislature. An expanded list of legislative highlights can be found on my assembly website: assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Sandy-Galef/.

Health and Safety

- We established the Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs to overhaul treatment and prevent abuse and neglect of over one million of our most vulnerable citizens who live in or utilize state-operated, certified or licensed facilities and programs. (A.10721/S.7749)
- Our I-STOP legislation creates a prescription-drug database to protect against prescription drug abuse and misuse. (A.10623/S.7637, Governor signed on 8/27/12)
- Lauren's Law will help us increase the number of organ donors registered in the state by requiring people to actively select "yes" or "skip this question," when applying for a driver's license or license renewal. (A.10039-B/S.7103-A)
- Before we allow any hydrofracturing for natural gas in New York State, the Assembly passed a bill that calls for a complete health assessment of the impacts this type of drilling would have on those affected by environmental hazards associated with the process. (A.10234)

Mandate Relief, Government Consolidation and Sharing

- With Tier VI Pension Reform, we created a pension tier for newly hired public employees that will increase individual contributions to pensions, cap the use of overtime in final pension calculations, and raise the retirement age, saving \$80 billion over 30 years. Putnam County savings are anticipated to be almost \$5.8 million within the next five years and over \$371.5 million over the next 30 years, while Westchester's savings are predicted to reach almost \$75.5 million over the next five years, and nearly \$5 billion over the next thirty years, reducing one of the most costly mandates on local and county governments, schools, libraries, and special districts. (A.9558/S.6735, Chap. 18 of 2012)
- We took a major expense off the county rolls by putting in place a staged state takeover of Medicaid administrative costs which will save counties \$1.2 billion over the next five years. (Budget 2012-13)
- Up until now, public libraries and BOCES were denied the opportunity to contract with one another, even in cases where their services would be mutually beneficial. This law will allow the two entities to enter into contracts with one another encouraging sharing and cost savings. (A.10147/S.7014, Chap. 422 of 2012)
- Another bill encouraging sharing and cost-saving is one I introduced. My legislation, that has only passed the

Assembly so far, would allow certain not-for-profits to purchase goods and services through county contracts. (A.8551/S.2012-A)

- With the intent of saving local taxpayers money by promoting fiscal efficiencies, this bill will allow fire companies to enter into contracts with other municipal corporations such as ambulance districts and other fire departments to jointly purchase goods, supplies and services. (A.10279-A/S.3739-A, Chap. 407 of 2012)

Tax Reduction

- The Tax Cap legislation imposed a limit of 2% on what school districts, libraries, and local governments could levy from the prior year without a majority override. There were certain allowances for capital expenses. As a result, there has been overwhelming support of our local school budgets at the polls when they stayed within this state cap. (A.8518/S.5856, Chap. 97 of 2011)
- We approved new income tax rates in New York. The new rates reduce income taxes for 99% of New Yorkers while still allowing the state to generate \$1.9 billion, which would not have been possible had the old rates for the highest earners been allowed to sunset. (A.40002/S.50002, Chap. 56 of 2011)
- At the same time as we reduced income tax rates, we also rolled back the MTA payroll tax for 80% of small businesses, all schools, and not-for-profits, and we reimbursed libraries for their outlays. (A.40002/S.50002, Chap. 56 of 2011)

Boosting Economic Activity

- The New York Works Program allocates \$1.2 billion in state and federal funds to repair bridges and roads in addition to the \$1.6 billion already allocated this year for a core transportation capital program for roads and bridges. (Budget 2012-13)
- This bill will increase the maximum award available under the historic preservation tax code, helping to encourage revitalization of the local economy by offering additional incentives to renovate and restore buildings in severe disrepair. (A.9110/S.6134)
- We will provide tax credits for small New York State craft breweries and allow farms to brew locally made beer and cider, to stimulate economic activity and encourage local production. (A.10695/S.7728, Chap. 109 of 2012 & A.10694/S.7727, Chap. 108 of 2012)



I took a wonderful tour of Grand Central with some of my interns, staff, and friends, led by Danny, our tour guide, with MTA Metro-North President Howard Permut, and Mark Mannix, also from the MTA. Danny is a wealth of knowledge and conducts regular public tours of this soon to be 200-year-old building run by MTA Metro-North which recently won a coveted international award for design excellence. For more information about internship opportunities in my district office, please call 914-941-1111.

- With this law, we removed certain regulations so that wineries can now more easily process, promote and sell New York Wines, making them more competitive in their industry. (A.7828-A/S.4143-A, Chap. 221 of 2011)
- We will enhance tax credits from 10 to 30 percent for film and television post production, further supporting this growing sector of New York's economy. (A.10244-A/S.7244-A, Chap. 268 of 2012)
- The Innovate NY Fund makes it easier for small businesses to obtain financing through this seed-stage equity fund. (A.8452/S.5782, Chap. 103 of 2011)
- This important legislation will subject those who repeatedly commit domestic violence crimes to stricter bail requirements and harsher penalties for their actions. No longer can we allow repeat domestic violence offenders to continue their actions without fear of repercussion. (A.10624/S.7638)

Environment/Energy

- I was a sponsor of the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Act. This legislation will increase public notice of certain sewage discharges. While current notice has proven inadequate, prompt notification of discharge events will help ensure that the public has the information needed to limit recreational uses of the water impacted by the sewage discharge. (A.10585-A/S.6268, Chap. 368 of 2012)
- I co-sponsored legislation for the NY Power Authority to produce a report detailing best practices with regard to energy cost savings for schools. This information will help schools statewide determine if there are ways in which they can become more energy efficient and save taxpayer dollars. (A.8527-C/S.6921, Chap. 420 of 2012)
- This legislation, which I co-sponsored and supported, will authorize a municipal corporation to provide a real property tax exemption for improvements to real property meeting LEED certification standards for green buildings. (A.1415-D/S.1462-D, Chap. 188 of 2012)
- In this year's state budget, we maintained the Environmental Protection Fund monies and provided an additional \$89 million in funding to rehabilitate state parks. (Budget 2012-13)
- I co-sponsored Complete Streets Legislation to revise the standards for New York's roadways so future road construction or renovation projects will give consideration to all users of a public road including pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit. (A.8311/S.5411-A, Chap. 398 of 2011)
- This legislation created Recharge NY, a permanent program that will make reduced-rate power available to non-profits and small businesses across New York State. (A.4010/S.2810, Chap. 60 of 2011)

Education

- We increased state aid to public school districts by 4%, an approximately \$805 million increase. (Budget 2012-13)
- We allocated an additional \$3.9 million to libraries, part of which was a reimbursement for the MTA payroll tax. (Budget 2012-13)
- This year we increased aid to community colleges for the first time in five years. (Budget 2012-13)



I meet regularly with schools leaders in my Assembly District to review issues, mandate relief suggestions, and funding for education. I was pleased we were able to increase state aid to schools by 4% to further help lower property taxes while supporting education.

Government Reform

- I have been a strong advocate for an independent redistricting commission and I was pleased the legislature passed this bill earlier this year. While I did vote against the legislation creating the new legislative lines to begin in 2013, I strongly supported this separate measure changing the NYS Constitution to guarantee we have independent redistricting in the future. (A.9526/S.6698)
- The Ethics Reform bill has created a new independent Joint Commission on Public Ethics and will increase transparency in New York State government by requiring public officials to disclose outside employment, income level, and names of clients who deal with the state in any business capacity. (A.8301/S.5679, Chap. 399 of 2011)
- I continue to sponsor legislation calling for the elimination of member items, or alternatively, to create more transparency and equitability in member item distribution. While these bills have not passed, there have not been any member items in the last three state budgets. (A.6215 & A.855)

Criminal Justice

- This year, we passed a bill to require that schools take action when students experience cyberbullying, harassment, bullying or discrimination. It will ensure that school districts immediately seek to end the harmful behavior, prevent recurrence and ensure the safety of the targeted students. It also will establish training to strengthen the ability of teachers and administrators to prevent and respond to such acts. (A.10712/S.7740, Chap. 102 of 2012)
- We passed a bill that will make it a crime to knowingly access child pornography online, which will bring New York in line with current federal law. (A.10713/S.7742)

Veterans

- This bill would allow veterans to have their New York State drivers' licenses indicate that they are a veteran. This will provide an easy way for veterans to be identified for special offers, programs and services for which they are eligible. (A.9611/S.6799)
- This new law, which I co-sponsored, creates a 300-foot buffer zone around funeral services for military members to prevent protestors from disturbing mourners. (A.7698/S.5605, Chap. 528 of 2011)



In July, I held a press conference with Senator David Carlucci, boating safety advocates, and a family who had lost their son in a boating tragedy, to support legislation I sponsor. This legislation would require a person operating a mechanically-propelled vessel to have a boating safety certificate. This requirement would be enacted gradually, starting with those who are 18 years old.

Assemblywoman Sandy Galef's Survey Results from the June 2012 Constituent Questionnaire

Question	Partial	Full	None
1. Do you support a partial public financing of state legislative campaigns, as happens in New York City, full public financing, as in Maine and Connecticut, or no public financing of campaigns?	24%	26%	50%
Question	YES	NO	
2. Should the legislature expand voter registration efforts by allowing people to register on the Internet to vote?	43%	57%	
3. There is currently a proposal, supported by public school districts, to allow these districts to limit transportation to private schools from the current 15 miles down to 7 miles. Would you support this proposal to reduce private school bus mileage distance if it could save taxpayers money, but make it harder for taxpaying private school parents to get their children to schools of their choice?	52%	48%	
4. Should school districts be allowed to place savings they realize throughout the year into a reserve fund to guard against large spikes in taxes due to unusual health claims and/or pension related costs?	77%	23%	
5. Should the legislature pass a law that would ban the use of tanning machines by those under the age of 18? Currently the law allows those 14-18 to use the machines with parental consent.	75%	25%	
6. New York is one of only two states that still charges sixteen-year-olds as adults in criminal court. Should we change the law to only treat those eighteen years and older as adults in criminal procedures?	47%	53%	
7. Do you believe that all properties in New York should be reassessed once every four years?	53%	47%	
8. Legislation has been introduced which would make medical use of marijuana legal in New York. Does it concern you that, if legalized, this product might be easier to access by those for whom it is not medically indicated?	39%	61%	
9. With the enacted federal healthcare reform legislation being challenged in the courts, do you believe New York should be looking towards implementing a single payer health care system where everyone would be insured through the state, as they are in Canada?	49%	51%	
10. Should we allow Mixed Martial Arts in New York?	28%	72%	

My Comments on June 2012 Constituent Survey Responses

Over 600 constituents responded to my June 2012 newsletter questionnaire. I was surprised at how narrow the margins were in some of the results. It shows how important these topics are and how split my constituents are on some of the issues. Survey participants agreed the most on question #4, with 77% supporting that school districts should be allowed to set up a reserve fund for teacher retirement fund contributions. I have a proposed bill in the legislature, A.8920, that would allow school districts to establish these reserve funds to contribute to the state teachers retirement fund. Allowing school districts to contribute to reserve funds will help moderate spikes in payment toward the New York State Teachers Retirement Fund and steady the rate of taxes levied to offset these pension costs.

75% of questionnaire respondents agreed that tanning machines should be banned for minors. I am pleased to report that a bill I co-sponsored, A.1074-B, which would ban tanning machine use for those 16 and under, was signed into law.

Approximately 72% of responders voted that Mixed Martial Arts should not be legalized in New York. The Assembly chose not to vote on a bill legalizing this activity, therefore maintaining this ban in New York State. Of those who returned the questionnaire, 61% weighed in that they would not be concerned if medical marijuana were legalized. I am a co-sponsor of bill A.7347-B, which would legalize medical marijuana. I supported this bill because I believe that marijuana has valid medical indicators that cannot be ascribed to other drugs. This bill would allow it to be used for medicinal purposes only, with strong restrictions on access.

53% of respondents agreed that properties in New York

should be reassessed every four years. I am the sponsor of a bill, A.9038, to require assessing units to conduct a reevaluation of assessments at least once every four years. Currently, assessments are conducted inconsistently across the state resulting in high numbers of tax grievances going to court, costing taxpayers money. There are municipalities in our area, in Westchester County specifically, that have not been reassessed in sixty years. This bill would ensure property assessments are done regularly and fairly, regardless of location. Reassessments are important because they assure equitable taxation throughout a community.

All of these issues will continue to be discussed in Albany. I look forward to an ongoing dialogue with you on the merits or detriments of the various proposals.



I recently hosted Sean Eldridge, founder of "Protect Our Democracy," on my television show "Speak Out." This group was created to advocate for campaign finance reform in New York State. The show will air on Wednesdays, Sept. 12, 19, 26 (and Oct. 3 on Cablevision only) at 8pm on Cablevision Channel 15, 21, or 74, or Comcast Channel 8.