



News from Assemblywoman

Sandy Galef

SPRING 2014

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Dear Constituent,

For the fourth year in a row, we have adopted an on-time state budget, a hallmark of how much more functional we have become. I am so proud to have worked together in the legislature in a bi-partisan fashion, and with the Governor, to produce a budget which stays under our self-imposed 2% cap in spending, but allows us to make significant restorations to programs which were hit so hard by the economy.

The most significant aspect of the budget for my localities is the work we did to rein in property taxes. First, we increased the state portion of education funding by an average of 5% statewide, and more in my school districts. My districts are receiving collectively an additional \$12,000,000 in state aid.

Next, if schools and municipalities stay within the state-mandated property tax levy cap, New York State has agreed to make sure property taxpayers will pay no more than they did the prior year in municipal, school, or county property taxes. In Year One, if these government entities stay within the cap, property taxpayers would receive a check for a tax credit in the mail to bring their increase down to zero. In Year Two of the tax freeze, the state requires all municipalities and school districts who want to guarantee their taxpayers receive this same tax credit, to not only stay within the tax levy cap, but also to identify strategies that will result in 1% savings to their budgets in each year of the following three years, by sharing and coordinating services within and between themselves to make government more efficient. If your schools and municipalities hold up their part of this bargain, eligible property taxpayers will receive a credit for any increase in property taxes for two straight years.

To that end, I have asked the New York State Deputy Secretary of State, my former Assembly colleague Dede Scozzafava, as well as the New York State Department of State Director of Local Government Services, Mark Pattison, to join me at **Cortlandt Town Hall on Thursday, May 29th, from 4 – 6 p.m.** (see right), to discuss success stories from around the state where governments have downsized, or shared back office services, or consolidated efforts that have resulted in savings for taxpayers. I encourage you to join me as well to learn more and help advocate for new approaches in your community that could result in savings.

I am so excited about all the good news in this budget. Please spend some time reviewing some of the highlights in this newsletter and feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Sandy Galef

Assemblywoman Galef invites Elected School and Municipal Officials and the Public to her

Property Tax Freeze Forum: Strategies for Continued Budget Savings

with New York State Deputy Secretary of State Dede Scozzafava

and

New York State Department of State Director of Local Government Services Mark Pattison

Thursday, May 29th, 2014
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Cortlandt Town Hall

1 Heady Street, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567

- Learn from local school and government efficiency success stories around the state.
- Hear different approaches to sharing and coordinating of services to save money.
- Find out about streamlining administrative/back-office service delivery.
- Discuss grant programs currently available to assist with shared service initiatives.

The Department of State is responsible for overseeing the Local Government Efficiency Program which has been in place since 2009.



Students in the Hendrick Hudson School District made valentines which they helped me distribute to our Veterans at the VA Hospital in Montrose. The snow day caused us to deliver these belatedly, but they were no less appreciated by our retired servicemen and women.

2014-15 Final Budget Highlights

On March 31st, the New York State Legislature passed an on-time New York State budget, our fourth year in a row that the budget has been completed on time. The final budget keeps New York State within our self-imposed two percent tax cap. Some of our accomplishments this year include:

School Aid

We increased education aid by \$1.1 billion dollars, or 5.4%, the largest investment in our schools in more than five years. \$551 million of this increase was over and above the original executive budget proposal. This increase includes an additional \$12 million for school districts in the 95th Assembly District. An additional \$40 million will be available for Universal Pre-Kindergarten Programs for schools across the state outside of New York City.

Common Core Changes

I have heard from numerous constituents regarding the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The final budget included a delay to certain parts of the implementation. These changes include: the prohibition of administering standardized tests to students in pre-k through grade two; the prohibition of state assessment test scores for grades three through eight from being recorded on a student's permanent record; and the prevention of school districts from solely using state-administered assessment tests in grades three through eight in making student placement or promotion decisions. The final budget also limits the amount of time that can be spent during the school day on test preparation for state assessments and locally-developed standardized testing. In addition, an overwhelming number of my constituents oppose educational databases sharing information with third-party vendors. The final budget will protect the privacy of students' personally identifiable information by terminating New York State's partnership with inBloom and by directing the company to delete any private student information it had already obtained. To learn more about the Common Core Learning Standards adopted by New York State, go to: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cia/common_core_standards/pdfdocs/p12_common_core_learning_standards_ela.pdf.

Environment

We increased by \$9 million the budget to support the Environmental Protection Fund.

Library Aid

We allocated an additional \$5 million above the executive budget proposal to public libraries across New York State.

Improving Roads

We added an additional \$40 million in CHIPS (Consolidated Highway Improvement Program) funding for local governments to fix roads that were badly damaged this past winter, including repair of the large number of potholes that have appeared on our roadways.

18-A Utility Surcharge

We will phase out the 18-A temporary utility surcharge sooner than originally planned, over the course of the next three years. Through this, we will save utility customers and businesses approximately \$600 million over the course of the phase out.

“Surprise Medical Bills”

We have made changes to protect consumers against surprise medical bills from out-of-network physicians. Additionally,

Continued on next page



As part of my local effort to ensure as many people as possible sign up for affordable health care, I teamed up with Premier Athletic Club in the Town of Cortlandt, and Hudson River HealthCare (HRHC) to bring enrollment specialists to the gym's healthy living event and help enroll people for health insurance.



I really enjoyed being a guest reader for these excited students at Van Cortlandtville Elementary School in the Lakeland School District to celebrate their reading week.



Putnam County Youth Bureau's Reality Check students visited me in Albany to advocate for issues related to smoking, tobacco, e-cigarettes and other substances that negatively affect teens and our communities.



A very impressive local robotics team in Ossining, Team Stubby, came to present their project to me dealing with a way to set up a system that could communicate with people in a wide area during a power outage, and to see if I had any thoughts about their system for the state.

2014-15 Final Budget Highlights - Continued from previous page

these changes will remove the consumer from billing disputes between out-of-network medical physicians and health insurers, and consumers will not be responsible for out-of-network costs in case of emergencies and surprise bills. New disclosure requirements we implemented will aim to help consumers determine whether providers are in their network, which will reduce the incidents of these unexpected medical bills.

Helping Seniors

We provided \$4.1 million in the budget to expand eligibility for the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program and \$5 million for community services for the elderly.

Funding for College

We increased funds for The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) by \$25.7 million, the first increase in 14 years. The maximum TAP Award will be increased by \$165 per full-time student, from \$5,000 to \$5,165. In addition, we included \$8 million in funding for a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Scholarship Program. Full-time scholarships to any CUNY or SUNY institutions will be offered to the top 10% of high school graduates if they pursue a STEM career and work in New York for five years.

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Act

New York is setting a statewide goal of 5% of participation on state contracts by certified service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprises, in addition to developing guidelines to promote these businesses.

Manufacturer's Tax Cut

To encourage the development and expansion of manufacturing businesses in New York, we have eliminated the income tax for manufacturers statewide. The current 5.9% income tax rate for manufacturers will drop to zero starting this year. This credit will save businesses \$193 million starting in 2014-15 and will encourage job creation across New York. The budget also created a 20% property tax credit for manufacturers who own or lease property in New York which is applicable for county, city, town, village and school taxes starting in the 2014 taxable year. While this tax credit had originally been

proposed for upstate, my Hudson Valley colleagues and I strongly advocated that Westchester and Putnam Counties be included as well, and I am pleased that businesses in my district will benefit from this tax cut.

Estate Tax Reform

The estate tax limit will be increased to \$5.25 million over the next 3 years, and will then match the federal level.

Child Care Subsidies

We allocated an additional \$34 million in the budget for child care subsidies to support an increase of more than 4,500 child care slots available statewide.

Fighting Heroin Addictions

We put in \$2 million more in funding for services related to the heroin addiction crisis we face across New York State, including substance abuse treatment programs.

Tax Freeze

As mentioned in my letter, this year we are offering a new two-year state level property tax credit. To obtain the credit for taxpayers in year one, school districts, municipalities and counties must stay within the 2 percent property tax to ensure their property taxes do not increase (the state will pay the difference in the form of a check for a tax credit between 0 and 2%). To benefit for the second year, schools, municipalities, and counties will have to submit detailed cost-cutting plans, including ways to consolidate or share services, which will result in local cost savings of at least one percent each year for the following three years. Municipalities and school districts which have already implemented cost reduction plans will also benefit. This measure is meant to incentivize efficiency at the local level, and will save taxpayers over \$1.5 billion over the next three years. While a "circuit breaker" plan which ties taxes to household income was only implemented in New York City at this time, since they will not benefit from this tax freeze for the rest of the state, I remain optimistic that the success of the circuit breaker in New York City will lead to its implementation in the rest of New York State in the future.

"Speak Out" and "Dear Sandy" TV Shows

I currently host two local television programs, *"Speak Out with Sandy Galef,"* and *"Dear Sandy,"* about local and state initiatives and programs, and where you can hear from some of your notable neighbors. These shows air on public access channels across my district. I hope you will tune in. You can also view recent episodes online at <http://tinyurl.com/ow2z7wf>.

Cablevision:

"Dear Sandy" on Fridays at 9:00 p.m.

"Speak Out" on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

Peekskill/Ossining Channel 15

Briarcliff, Ossining, Scarborough, Buchanan, Cortlandt, Croton, Garrison, Montrose, Peekskill, Philipstown South, Verplanck

Wappingers Falls Channel 21

Cold Spring, Philipstown North

"Dear Sandy" on Fridays at 9:00 p.m.

"Speak Out" on Wednesdays at 8:30 p.m.

Yorktown Channel 74

Lake Peekskill, Putnam Valley

Upcoming Shows:

"Speak Out with Sandy Galef: Hudson Fjord Trail"

May 28, June 4, 11, 18 & 25

"Dear Sandy: Peekskill Area Pastors Association"

June 20, 27, July 4, 11 & 18

Comcast

"Dear Sandy" on Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

"Speak Out" on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.

Channel 8

Carmel, Kent, Mahopac & Putnam Valley

Upcoming Shows:

"Speak Out with Sandy Galef: Hudson Fjord Trail"

May 28, June 4 & 11

"Dear Sandy: Peekskill Area Pastors Association"

June 20, 27 & July 4



Here I was joined by Dar Williams and Mark Wildonger, from Scenic Hudson, on the set of my TV Show, *Speak Out*, where we discussed the Hudson Fjord Hike/Bike Trail project in Cold Spring.



News from
Assemblywoman
**Sandy
Galef**

**Property Tax Savings Forum
4th On Time Budget Wrap-up**

SPRING 2014

January Questionnaire Results

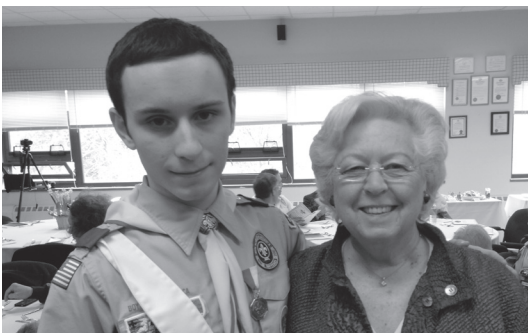
I would like to thank all who answered my January newsletter questionnaire. 711 of you responded on a number of important issues being discussed in the state legislature. I will certainly continue to evaluate these legislative issues and keep your opinions in mind throughout the legislative session.

Bill A.8198/S.6204, which I have sponsored, establishes the fourth Tuesday of June as New York's Primary Day. Allowing the state primaries to occur in June would mean our overseas service members could have ample time to ensure their votes are counted. Additionally, it has been estimated that holding a single primary election would save state and local governments up to \$50 million. **83%** of respondents said "Yes" when asked if New York State should require all primaries to take place in June.

Other results from the January Questionnaire:

- **96%** believe that advertisers should be prohibited from accessing the new education database containing confidential student data, which the State Education Department is creating for parents. (In the state budget, we eliminated the outsourcing of student data collection.)
- **93%** voted that Super PACS, special interest groups, and other organizations that support candidates during election season should be required to disclose their sources of funding and how much they spend on political communications.
- **83%** said that New York State should ban polystyrene (Styrofoam), which could be replaced by paper, recyclable materials, or biodegradable products.

- **76%** believe that we should oppose efforts taking place at the federal level to require states to allow longer and heavier double-trailer trucks on our state highways.
- **72%** said that Boating While Intoxicated infractions should impact a person's driver's license.
- **61%** said that New York should require solar panel installation on all building projects that are significantly funded by the state.
- **57%** wanted to raise the age to purchase tobacco products to 21. **37%** want no change in the legal age, and **6%** want to raise it to 19 years old.
- **51%** said that healthcare insurance companies should cover the cost of GPS tracking devices for families of autistic children and adults with memory loss.
- **51%** said that New York State should fund cameras on the backs or sides of school buses to help enforce the no-passing-a-school-bus law with the intent of helping to improve safety for school children.



Briarcliff Boy Scout Michael Feist catered and hosted a fantastic luncheon to honor the Briarcliff Manor Fire Department as his Eagle Scout Project. Michael put together a phenomenal and professional program in addition to preparing the food himself—an outstanding effort.

Annually, I offer unpaid summer internships to high school and college students who have an interest in government and politics. This program allows students to get a first-hand look at the various aspects of state government, from helping to write letters and engaging in research projects, to creating citations as well as sitting in on some of my meetings. Interns also attend public events with me. This program will not only teach interns new skills and concepts, but will also enhance the ones that they already have, and is a wonderful addition to a resumé, as well as enhancing one's understanding of both the local communities and state government.

Anyone with an interest in government who would like to take advantage of this opportunity should visit my website at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Sandy-Galef>, click on the Important Links tab, and fill out the online application, or call Dana Levenberg in my district office at 914-941-1111.