



2015
Legislation

Fighting the Stigma
of Mental Illness

Advocating for
People with TBI

Assemblywoman

Aileen M. Gunther

Winter 2015

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Dear Friend,

As the New Year approaches, I wanted to take a moment to share with you some of the highlights of the last year.

I'm both happy and proud to report that I passed the most bills in the New York State Assembly this year – more than anybody since 2008. This is a testament not only to how seriously I take my responsibility to you, but to the power of the thousands of New Yorkers who take the time to call, email, and visit their legislators to advocate for passage of legislation that's important to them.

It was great to finish the annual Senior Tour this fall. Meeting with constituents across the district provides great insight into the issues that matter most to you. It guides my work in Albany and at home.

The District Offices in Monticello and Middletown are as busy as ever. The doors are always open, and you should feel free to stop by, call, or email if there's any way I can help you, your friends, or your family.

I hope you have a happy and healthy New Year and hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

Aileen Gunther
Member of Assembly



Speaker of the Assembly Carl Heastie traveled north to tour the 100th Assembly District. Here, we were joined by Town of Thompson Supervisor Bill Rieber and Charlie Degliomini from Empire Resorts as we toured the site of the future Montreign Resort Casino and Adelaar. The Speaker also did a walking tour of the Village of Monticello and City of Middletown during his visit.

2015 Legislation

2015 was a particularly productive year for the 100th Assembly District in Albany. With my partners in the Senate, I worked hard to pass 30 bills through both houses addressing a variety of issues from updating the Breastfeeding Mother's Bill of Rights to exempting fire vehicles from weight restrictions on roads.

Helping people with disabilities Achieve a Better Life Experience (ABLE)

For people living with physical or developmental disabilities and their families, financial struggles are common. Disabled individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can't accrue savings without the risk of becoming ineligible for services. ABLE accounts, authorized by the federal government and enacted by each state individually, allow people with disabilities to accrue savings to pay for certain expenses and not risk eligibility for benefits.

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Some of the best ideas for legislation come from my constituents. If you have an idea for legislation, send an email to gunthea@assembly.state.ny.us or call the Monticello office at 845-794-5807.

Helping the Middletown School District

I was honored to be acknowledged by the School Board of the Enlarged City School District of Middletown for my commitment to the district. In this year's budget, I fought for \$500,000 for the district to provide summer school. Summer school is critical to ensuring children maintain the gains they made during the year, but also provides breakfast and lunch.



Ralph Cheney, My Hero

Ralph Cheney, veteran, pancreatic cancer survivor, and dear friend, took a moment after the Veterans Day ceremony at the Sullivan County Government Center for this picture. He is a true inspiration.



Bell Flavors and Fragrances Tour

I had an interesting and informative tour of Bell Flavors and Fragrances, a thriving, family-owned, international company that calls the City of Middletown home. It's nice to know that many of the iconic fragrances of household items were developed right here.



"Parking it" in Mt. Hope

For too long, the seniors in the Town of Mt. Hope had inadequate and unsafe parking at the community center. I was able to secure funding for the completion of a new parking area next to the community center and the creation of additional handicap accessible spaces in front.



Giving Back at Thanksgiving

Tom came down from the Albany office to listen to me sing a rousing rendition of "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" while we cleaned beans for Thanksgiving Dinner at the Federation for the Homeless. The Federation is the only soup kitchen in Sullivan County and serves hundreds of meals each week and during the holiday.

Fighting the Stigma of Mental Illness



We are fortunate to have so many great advocates for mental health in Orange and Sullivan Counties. Many joined me to urge the Governor to sign legislation to create a mental health stigma tax check-off. I'm happy to report that the Governor has signed this legislation.

This year, when you complete your income taxes, you'll have an opportunity to contribute to a fund to fight mental health stigma. This is critically important to the thousands of people who struggle with mental illness, but don't seek treatment because of the associated stigma. Mental illness is a recoverable illness with proper treatment.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental illness, visit the New York State Office of Mental Health's website for valuable resources: www.omh.ny.gov.



Honored by FASNY with the Golden Trumpet Award

It was an honor to receive the Golden Trumpet Award from the Firefighters Association of the State of New York (FASNY). This is FASNY's highest award given to a person who has demonstrated exceptional support for and assistance to the volunteer fire service.

Our volunteer firefighters are the backbone of our community. They sacrifice their time and safety to protect us, and I am immeasurably grateful. Receiving the Golden Trumpet was meaningful and humbling.

I was happy to be able to give back to many of our local departments this year. In October, I announced that each of the departments that fought the fire on the Shawangunk Ridge would be receiving \$7000 to help compensate for their losses during the days-long battle.

**Interested in becoming a volunteer firefighter?
Visit FASNY's website: www.fireinyou.org.**

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As the state continues to transition away from institutional models of care to more community-based care, ABLE accounts will help people with disabilities lead more independent, healthier lives. I was proud to sponsor this legislation that has passed both houses and is awaiting action by the Governor.

Making Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccines Mandatory

This year, I sponsored legislation that is now law requiring all students entering the seventh and twelfth grades to be immunized for meningococcal meningitis.

Each year, thousands of people across the country contract meningococcal meningitis. Meningitis can lead to death in as little as a few hours. Even when treated, 10-15% of those who contract the disease die from it. Many survivors lose their arms or legs, have problems with their nervous systems, become deaf, or suffer seizures or strokes. Symptoms of meningitis are very similar to flu symptoms, which often delays treatment.

For more information, visit: https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/meningococcal/fact_sheet.htm



Assemblywoman
**Aileen M.
Gunther**
Reports to the People

Winter 2015

Advocating for People with TBI

Every 13 seconds, somebody in the United States suffers a traumatic brain injury. That's why representatives from the Brain Injury Association of New York State visited the Monticello District Office to talk about their legislative priorities for the coming year and spread the word about traumatic brain injury.

