



# NEWS FROM Assemblymember **John T. McDonald III**

**CONSTITUENT  
SURVEY**

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Fall 2015

Dear Neighbor:

As your representative in the New York State Assembly, I wanted to share with you highlights from this past legislative session including important components of the state budget.

My legislative focus continues to be on supporting education and job creation, improving our fragile health care environment, reducing unfunded mandates, promoting safer neighborhoods, and preserving and protecting our natural resources.

As always, my office is available to assist you. If you are having trouble with state or local government issues, please do not hesitate to contact me by calling (518) 455-4474, or by emailing [mcdonaldj@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:mcdonaldj@assembly.state.ny.us). You can also join my mailing list for community and legislative updates by visiting my Assembly website.

I encourage you to reach out and provide any thoughts or comments on any concerns or issues that you may have. I am always willing to meet with constituents in my district office or out in the district. Your comments and questions have and continue to be helpful as we shape our legislative agenda and meet the needs of those we are privileged to serve.

Sincerely,

John T. McDonald III



Assemblymember McDonald asks questions during a Health Committee budget hearing.

## CAPITAL SOUTH CAMPUS CENTER

Trinity Alliance's Capital South Campus Center is a mixed-use education campus that serves the greater Capital Region. It is playing a major role in the redevelopment of Albany's South End neighborhood and is a hub for training, educational and community functions, child care and youth programming for the purpose of stabilizing disadvantaged families, and positioning them for the employment opportunities of tomorrow. The facility houses classrooms, including a dual purpose lab for certified nursing; an urban agricultural greenhouse; offices for intake, assessment, and early intervention counseling; a multipurpose computer lab; drop-in day care; offices for SUNY Albany's Promise program, and a student cafe and commons.

In addition, the building is the new home for the city's Meals-on-Wheels program which will serve as a classroom for culinary arts students from Schenectady County Community College. The kitchen is a unique partnership of the Albany Housing Authority, Senior Services of Albany, and Schenectady County Community College. These exciting new developments at the Capital South Campus Center are a testament to its mission to serve not only the city of Albany, but the Capital Region at large.

For more information on the CSCC, located at 20 Warren Street in Albany, please call 449-5155, or check it out at <http://www.trinityalliancealbany.org/CSCC> today!



Assemblymember McDonald attends the ribbon cutting for the CSCC Meals on Wheels Culinary Arts Kitchen. (Pictured left to right) John Demers, Capital District Physicians Health Plan; Dr. Steady Moono, President, Schenectady County Community College; Sean Fitzgerald, Assistant Commissioner HCR; Hon. Kathy Sheehan, Mayor of Albany; Steven T. Longo, Executive Director, Albany Housing Authority; John McIntyre of Spotlight News.

**Assemblymember McDonald  
serves on the following committees:**

Aging

Alcoholism and Substance Abuse

Cities

Insurance

Mental Health and  
Developmental Disabilities

Real Property Taxation

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## CHIPS FUNDING

Each year, the 2015-16 Executive Budget provides funding for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) which is utilized by municipalities across the state to maintain their transportation infrastructure and local roads. This year, an additional \$50 million in funding was allocated for Extreme Winter Recovery Funding to address the impacts of the harsh winter months that will be used to address local bridge and pavement needs. For the three counties that encompass the 108th Assembly District (Albany, Rensselaer, and Saratoga), a total of \$2,246,977 in additional funding was allocated.

The total apportionments for the municipalities that make up the district are shown. This represents increases for the third year in a row to assist our local governments in maintaining our communities' streets.

*The apportionments for the municipalities that make up the district are below:*

City/Town/Village	2015-2016 Extreme Winter Recovery Funding	2015-2016 CHIPS Funding
City of Albany	\$1,553,512	\$179,300
City of Cohoes	\$ 350,241	\$ 40,281
Village of Green Island	\$ 47,553	\$ 6,728
Town of North Greenbush	\$ 102,474	\$ 14,325
City of Rensselaer	\$ 2,340,781	\$ 21,960
City of Troy	\$ 954,295	\$110,002
Town of Waterford	\$ 37,782	\$ 5,139
City of Watervliet	\$ 197,849	\$ 20,669

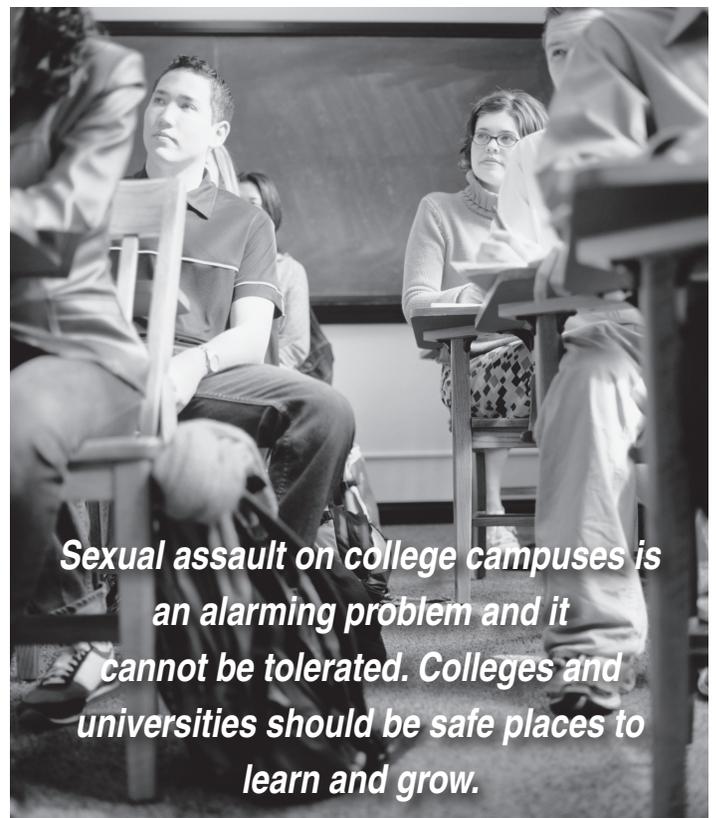
## "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"

The governor recently signed legislation passed by both houses of the legislature to combat sexual assault on college and university campuses statewide. The legislation requires that all New York colleges implement uniform policies and procedures regarding sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and activity that may otherwise violate codes of conduct. Sexual assault on college campuses is an alarming problem and it cannot be tolerated. Colleges and universities should be safe places to learn and grow, not insulated bubbles where serious crimes are buried and treated like simple campus disciplinary issues. This law requires colleges to address this issue in a way that protects the rights of their students.

Under this new measure, all colleges in New York are required to adopt a specific standard for consent in their codes of conduct. Consent is defined as a knowing, voluntary, and mutual decision among all participants to engage in sexual activity. The standard also makes clear that prior consent to sexual activity does not necessarily demonstrate future consent, nor does silence or a lack of resistance.

Additionally, the legislation provides amnesty to anyone who reports an incident of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking from being subject to disciplinary action for violating the college's drug and alcohol policy. Colleges are also required to adopt a bill of rights that makes clear students' rights when reporting an act of sexual assault to the college or university.

There are too many instances of sexual assault on college campuses that go unreported. We need to create an environ-



*Sexual assault on college campuses is an alarming problem and it cannot be tolerated. Colleges and universities should be safe places to learn and grow.*

ment that makes it easier for student victims to come forward and get the justice and assistance they deserve.

## NEW YORK STATE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2015

As part of this past budget, the legislature approved a new municipal grant program for water infrastructure improvements. It is one of the first new grant programs for local governments in several years. This is more important than ever as there has been little, if anything, to cheer about in regard to increased funds for local governments.

What is special about this grant program is that my colleague and friend, Assemblymember Steven Otis (D-Rye), and I started this effort in the Assembly and gained support from our colleagues and the Speaker to make this program a reality. As former Mayors, this initiative carried even greater meaning as we both know first-hand the positive impact this funding will have on local governments.

The grant program is a total of \$200 million over a three year period which gives local governments time to apply and implement projects. Additionally, the program has a ceiling of no more than \$5 million per award with an emphasis on communities that have economic hardship and/or pending or active enforcement actions. The program is

*The Water Infrastructure Improvement Act will provide local governments a total of \$200 million for drinking water and storm water/sewer system improvements.*

focused on improving clean water, specifically targeting drinking water or storm/sewer water systems—two areas in need of investment.

This is a smart investment for local governments, not only as a grant program, but also so that they can choose to partner with the \$1 billion New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation loan program to help improve our infrastructure, our environment, and reduce costs to ratepayers.

# CONSTITUENT SURVEY

Below, I've included a constituent survey to gauge issues that are important to you. I encourage you to fill out the survey as it helps to guide my work as your representative in the State Assembly. I look forward to receiving your input.

There are two ways that you can complete the survey:

- By returning the enclosed survey by mail to my Albany office
- By filling it out online at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/John-T-McDonald-III/story/65118/>

1. (a) Do you believe that New York should join other states to protect our environment by imposing a ban on polystyrene and/or plastic bags replaced by paper, recyclable material, or biodegradable products provided that retailers were to charge a 10 cent fee for the new bags to offset the costs to small businesses?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

(b) If you said "no" to question (a), would you change your answer if 5 cents of that fee would be used to fund our state parks?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

2. The proposed Education Tax Credit would give a boost to private and parochial schools by allowing tax exempt donations to these schools as well as to public schools. Do you think we should allow this?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

3. In today's society it is important to provide a quality education to everyone. Do you believe that we should provide financial aid for those trying to get a college education (a) while in prison or (b) children whose parents may be undocumented residents (as the DREAM Act would do)?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

4. To begin to address voter engagement, should we allow 16 and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote with their county boards of elections so that when they turn 18, they will automatically be added to the voter rolls?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

5. (a) Should we increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour statewide for fast-food employees (i.e. employees of fast food companies with 30 or more locations)?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

(b) Should we introduce legislation to help lessen the impact of a potential minimum wage increase on our small businesses?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

(c) What amount do you feel would be an appropriate one to raise the minimum wage to over a five year period?

Constituent 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Constituent 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you believe students' state standardized test scores should make up a significant part of a teacher's performance evaluation?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

7. Should 16 and 17-year-olds charged with a crime be able to be tried as adults?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

8. (a) Do you believe the state should appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the death of unarmed individuals who died at the hands of law enforcement officers?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

(b) Should the position of such a special prosecutor be a permanent one?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

9. Should the state erase misdemeanor convictions for possessing a small amount of marijuana for personal, non-medical use provided that the person convicted does not reoffend for 12 months?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

10. Would you support increased state funding for home health aid if it were to increase your taxes?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

11. Medicaid is generally the highest cost to county governments. It would cost the state \$2.3 billion to take over Medicaid management from the fifty-five counties outside New York City. Would you be willing to assume the cost if it were spread out over your state taxes for a number of years if it meant lower property taxes?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

12. In an effort to help lower property taxes would you support, possibly through an increase in state taxes, a program where the state would match municipal governments 50 cents for every \$1 saved by increased municipal aid to be used at their discretion?

Constituent 1:  Yes  No

Constituent 2:  Yes  No

## PROPERTY TAX REBATE PROGRAM

The 2015-16 Budget includes a new four-year, \$3.1 billion property tax rebate program that will give homeowners much-needed property tax relief. The rebates will be provided in addition to homeowners' School Tax Relief (STAR) benefits and are contingent upon schools and municipalities staying within the two percent property tax cap.

After the first year, the program will operate similar to the "circuit breaker" proposal that was long supported by the Assembly in that the amount of the rebates will be based on a household's annual income for families earning up to \$275,000.

Senior citizens in the Enhanced STAR program will receive the property tax rebates, which will increase to 34 percent of their current savings over the next four years. This will go a long way in helping those seniors who are living on fixed incomes and struggling to stay in their homes.

Additionally, a program created last year will send a second rebate check in 2016 to residents whose school district and municipality take steps to reduce costs and adhere to the tax cap. While the rebate check provides some relief by putting money back in the pockets of the taxpayers, I would much rather not see an increase in taxes over a rebate check.

For years, skyrocketing property taxes prevented families and small businesses from putting down roots in New York State. But we're actively changing that by continuing our efforts to lower taxes and make New York a more attractive place to live, work and more importantly to stay.

## EXTENDING THE PROPERTY TAX CAP

The property tax cap limits the amount local governments and school districts can raise their property tax rate annually to no more than 2 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. The tax cap—which has saved taxpayers more than \$7 billion since it took effect—will be extended for another four years.

Reforms to the tax cap will allow exemptions for Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) programs' capital expenses, as well as payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) agreements. Taking BOCES payments and PILOTs into account will help school districts and local governments make necessary investments for the future while keeping their commitment to lowering the property tax burden. Extending the tax cap will provide the kind of relief our taxpayers deserve. It ensures our families can afford to stay in their homes and businesses can continue to thrive.

While I support efforts to lower taxes, I am also concerned about the impact on services that are provided by local governments as a result of the tax cap. As a former Mayor, I know how difficult it is to manage a city with many of the unfunded mandates imposed upon municipal governments. It is incumbent that we continue to reduce mandates in order to help our local government leaders to continue to provide services to their residents. We must also remain committed to finding ways to provide additional revenue to assist local governments in keeping within the tax cap.



*News from*  
Assemblymember  
**John T.  
McDonald III**



Assemblymember McDonald welcomes students from the Wynantskill School District to the War Room during their visit to the State Capitol.