



2016
Legislation

Education Funding

Heroin and
Opiate Abuse
Prevention

Assemblywoman **Aileen M. Gunther**

Winter 2016

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Dear Friend,

I'm happy to report that 2016 was a productive year for the 100th Assembly District. With your support, I sponsored and passed 24 bills that also passed the Senate – more than any other member of the 150-member New York State Assembly for the second consecutive year.

In this newsletter, you'll find some highlights of the legislation I passed, as well as information on the New York State Budget and some helpful information about programs and services that might be available to you.

As always, if you have any questions or need any help, my door is always open. Stop in, call, or email. As your elected official, you are my priority.

Sincerely,

*Aileen Gunther
Member of Assembly*



We are privileged to have such hard-working, dedicated volunteer firefighters protecting us.

Helping Fire Departments

Our volunteer firefighters are owed a debt of gratitude. Without compensation or acknowledgement, they answer the call any time of the day or night to protect our homes and our lives. That's why I'm proud to work with the Firemen's Association of the State of New York to pass legislation to assist local departments.

This year, we worked to expand the ranks of our local fire departments by allowing firefighters who live out of state to serve in New York (A.1020B). Many people who serve in their out-of state community have second homes in Sullivan and Orange Counties, but because of their residency haven't been able to serve here.

Volunteers Always Needed...

For more information on how to join your local fire department, call

In Sullivan County: Sullivan County Emergency Management at 845-807-0508

In Orange County: Orange County Emergency Services at 845-615-0400

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Fixing the Sex Offender Registry

As a mother and a grandmother, keeping my family safe is my first priority. That's why I was shocked when, back in 2014, I learned that a Level 3 Sex Offender living in another area spent a significant amount of time at a family-owned property in the Town of Wallkill, but because it wasn't the primary residence, that location wasn't listed on the New York State Sex Offender Registry. I passed legislation to fix

that; it requires sex offenders disclose multiple residences. (A.1819A).

***It's good to know:** To search the New York State Sex Offender Registry, go to <http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/nsor/> or to sign up for Sex Offender updates or emergency alerts in your neighborhood go to www.nyalert.gov*

Ending early termination fees for the deceased

After my mother's death last June, my sister and I went about cancelling the utility services at her home. One provider tried to charge a substantial fee for cancelling the service before the end of her contract. After some research, I learned that there is nothing that prevents utility or cell phone providers from charging early termination fees, even if somebody dies. I was proud to pass legislation, now law that will prevent this from happening again (Chap. 331).

If someone you know has passed away and was charged an early termination fee, you can call the Attorney General's office at 1-800-771-7755 or use the online complaint form found here: <http://www.ag.ny.gov/complaint-forms>



Each year, I visit each of our district's senior groups to give an update on my work in Albany and to listen to the concerns of our community's seniors.



This year, we were lucky to have the help of students from Pine Bush High School with us as we prepared Thanksgiving dinner at the Federation for the Homeless.

Increasing film production in Upstate NY

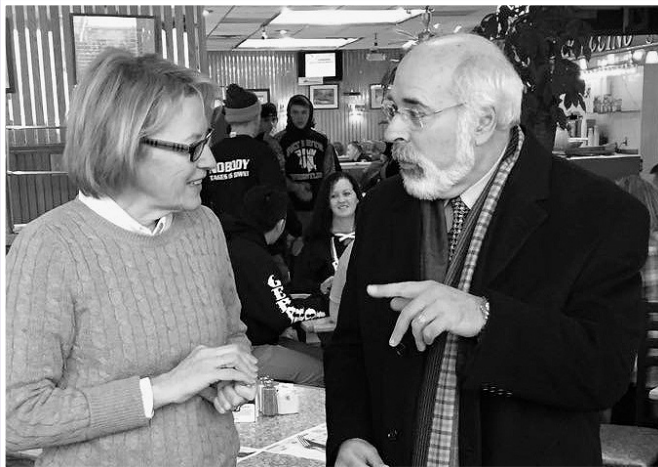
To boost film production outside of the New York City Studio Zone, the 2013-14 State Budget included language to create an additional 10% film production tax credit for "Upstate" counties. However, Hudson Valley and Catskills counties, including Sullivan, Ulster, and Orange were not considered "Upstate" for the purposes of the credit and have been unable to tap into this lucrative economic development opportunity.

To correct this inequity, I introduced legislation last March to include our community in the expanded credit. With support from local leaders and groups including City of Middletown Mayor Joseph DeStefano, Catskill Mountainkeeper, and the Hudson Valley Building Construction Trades Council, the legislation was recently signed into law (Chap. 420 of 2016).

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Education Funding

Ensuring that our schools are adequately funded is one of my most important jobs. This year, I fought for an increase in education aid of nearly \$1.5 billion. The Gap Elimination Adjustment has ended and foundation aid increased by \$627 million. This large increase in state aid allowed every one of our school districts to stay within the tax cap.



The Superintendent of Liberty School District, Dr. William Silver, and I discuss issues affecting our schools.

Aid to community colleges

Not only are our community colleges centers of learning for our area, they are economic drivers as well. That's why it's so important that our colleges and students receive the support they need to be successful. State aid to community colleges will be increasing by \$100 per full-time student and tuition rates for students will be frozen.

For more information on how to enroll at one of our local community colleges, call

SUNY Sullivan: 845-434-5750 ext. 4287

SUNY Orange: 845-341-4030

For more information on how to pay for college, including grants and scholarships, visit <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid.html>

Middle-class Tax Cuts

More money in your pocket is good for you and it's good for our economy. Beginning in 2018, taxpayers will receive a tax cut of \$270 million, increasing to \$3 billion by 2025. We will have the lowest income tax rates in New York since World War II.



I had the opportunity to speak about mental health and substance abuse at Catholic Charities in Middletown.

Heroin and Opiate Abuse Prevention

Heroin and opiate abuse has become a public health crisis. Our neighbors are losing their lives to this terrible addiction. That's why I've passed legislation making it easier for people to return their unused prescription medication to pharmacies. This will help keep dangerous opiates out of the hands of our children. This year's budget also includes \$25 million for the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to implement a Heroin and Opiate Treatment Prevention Package.

For more information on how to talk to a loved one about heroin and opiate abuse, please visit <https://combatheroin.ny.gov/kitchen-table-toolkit>, or call 1-877-8-HOPE-NY (1-877-846-7369)

For a list of treatment and prevention providers in our area, please visit <https://www.oasas.ny.gov/accesshelp/index.cfm>

Transportation Funding

Studies show that investment in infrastructure often pays for itself. The \$27 billion 5-year capital plan in this year's budget will ensure that our roads and bridges are safe and will put people back to work.

For a list of ongoing transportation projects in our area, please visit <https://www.dot.ny.gov/projects>



*I had the pleasure of visiting
Middletown High School with New
York State Regents Chancellor Betty
Rosa and Regent Judith Johnson.*



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

Winter 2016



*I introduced the Orange County
Youth Bureau on the floor of the
Assembly in Albany,
with City of Middletown Mayor
Joe DeStefano.*