



ASSEMBLYMEMBER PATRICIA A. FAHY



Legislative & Community Report to the 109th Assembly District

Dear Neighbors,

I'm honored to continue to represent you in the New York State Assembly and will continue to work tirelessly for each of you in Albany, Bethlehem, Guilderland, and New Scotland. This edition of the Legislative and Community Report to the 109th Assembly

District includes updates from the recently concluded legislative session, highlights from the past few months within the district, and important and interesting information for you and your family.

This legislative session was an intensely busy and productive one. Despite the tumultuous session and the unprecedented leadership changes, I am proud to note the work continued with an on-time budget and several notable accomplishments at the end of session, including: property tax relief, increased transportation and infrastructure funding, along with record increases in education support and high stakes testing relief. While much more work remains on a host of issues, such as criminal justice reforms, minimum wage increases, and the environment, I am pleased that my LED Streetlight legislation passed overwhelmingly and will enable municipalities to seek ownership with a projected savings of up to \$100 million annually for local governments.

I will remain an outspoken advocate for reforms and improvements in environmental sustainability, education, job creation, economic and community development, public safety, and more. I will continue to work closely with my colleagues in the legislature and local government to take ideas that will benefit the community and put them into action.

Your thoughts and input on each of these important issues are valuable to me, and I welcome your viewpoints. Please feel free to join me at a future community event, contact my office by phone, e-mail, or social media, and sign up for our regular e-mail updates by sending a note to fahyp@assembly.state.ny.us.

Assemblymember
PATRICIA A. FAHY

2015 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Providing direct property tax relief

Recently passed legislation includes a new four-year, \$3.1 billion property tax rebate program to give homeowners needed property tax relief – albeit not the direct relief for middle and working class families as I would have preferred. 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 long supported by the Assembly, where 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. 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. Again, I would have preferred a more direct, targeted reduction in taxes.

Extending the property tax cap

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

Needed reforms to the tax cap will allow exemptions for BOCES programs' capital expenses as well as payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) agreements.



Joining U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressmen Paul Tonko and Chris Gibson, along with local electeds at a press conference promoting her proposed Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2015 to expand disability and health coverage to include thousands of sailors who were stationed offshore during the Vietnam War yet may have received significant Agent Orange exposure.

Education reforms adopted

Improving teacher evaluations and student assessments

The final education legislative reforms adopted would improve teacher evaluations and student assessments by:

- Creating a content review committee to analyze standardized

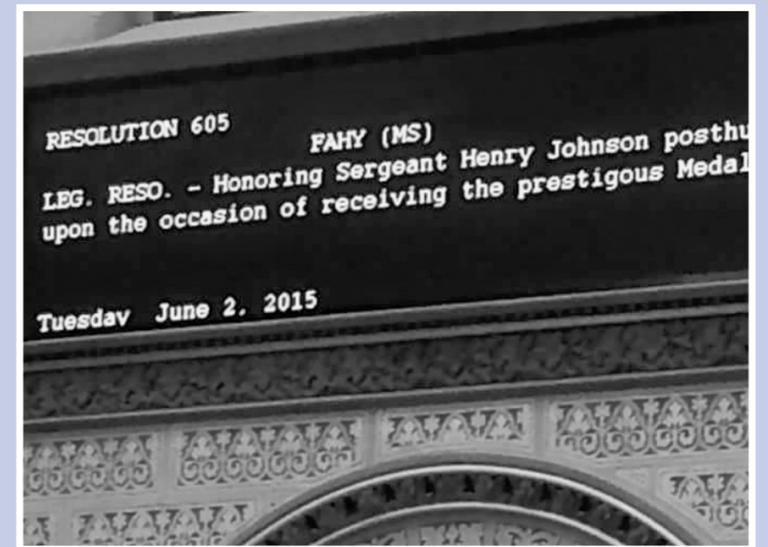
Spotlight on the 109TH



Assemblymember Fahy joined Assemblymember McDonald, Assemblymember Steck, Senator Avella, Mayor Sheehan, and the Sierra Club's Roger Downs to promote the Petroleum Storage Surety bill.



Assemblymember Fahy joined Laura Bierman and Barbara Bartoletti of the League of Women Voters, along with two Bethlehem students who shadowed the Assemblymember as part of the League's student program.



Honoring Sgt. Henry Johnson in June in the Assembly through the passage of a resolution commemorating Sgt. Johnson's heroic actions during World War I and his receipt of the Medal of Honor.



Assemblymember Fahy spoke with fourth grade students from Montessori Magnet School in Albany. The children asked wonderful questions and on a busier day than their teachers expected, got to meet Assemblymember McDonald and retired Assemblymember McEnery.



Assemblymember Fahy reads to children to celebrate The Week of the Young Child "Our Family Reads" day at Club Fed daycare at the Leo O'Brien Federal Building in Albany.



Assemblymember Fahy speaks at a ceremony naming a portion of Route 146 in Guilderland as the Lt. Col. Todd J. Clark Memorial Highway in memory of his extraordinary service in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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- tests in grades 3 through 8 in English language arts and math to ensure these tests are fair, accurate and appropriate for each grade level; and
- Taking into account factors such as poverty, English Language Learner (ELL) status, students with disabilities and prior academic history when measuring student growth under the new teacher evaluation system.

Enhancing education for all students

I am very pleased that the final legislative package incorporates my Testing Readability Bill (A.7460) introduced in April that would require state administered standardized English or mathematics assessments to be presented at a readability level that is grade-level appropriate. Many thanks to Guilderland educators who drew my attention to this problem and helped provide the technical expertise in developing the legislation.

In addition, the legislation requires the State Education Department to release significantly more questions and answers from standardized English language arts and math tests used for grades 3 through 8. This will provide teachers additional information they can utilize in the classroom. Also, teachers, principals, and super-

intendents will no longer be required to enter into confidentiality agreements preventing them from discussing the contents of these exams after the exams have been publicly released.

Investing in nonpublic schools

The Assembly's legislation includes a significant investment in nonpublic schools. This \$250 million, used over two years, will reimburse private and parochial schools for the costs of performing state mandated education services.

Campus sexual assault

After months of negotiations, the Assembly passed legislation that I supported requiring all colleges in New York State to implement uniform policies and procedures regarding sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and activity that may otherwise violate codes of conduct (A.8244).

Under the measure, all colleges in the state are required to adopt a specific standard for consent in their codes of conduct. Affirmative 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.

Health insurance access for pregnant women

The Assembly passed legislation that I supported that includes pregnancy as criteria to allow for special enrollment in a health insurance plan (A.6780-B). The bill would give expectant mothers who are uninsured the opportunity to enroll in a health insurance plan at any time, regardless of whether it falls outside a designated enrollment period. Currently, special enrollment periods often include marriage, divorce, gaining citizenship and birth. By adding pregnancy to this list, expectant mothers may apply for a qualified health plan without having to wait months for an enrollment period to open up.

Protecting employees from reproductive health discrimination

The Assembly passed a bill I supported that prevents an employer from discriminating or taking any retaliatory personnel action against employees based on their reproductive health decisions (A.1142-A).

This legislation was in response to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requirement that health insurance plans cover FDA-approved birth control methods without out-of-pocket costs that led to some employers attempting to block access to this benefit. This legislation – nicknamed the "Boss Bill" – is a response to the 2014 Hobby Lobby case, where the Supreme Court ruled that corporations can have religious beliefs of their own and, further, that these beliefs can be used to deny women health coverage for contraceptives based on those beliefs.

Modernizing school and library board petitions

Legislation I sponsored with Senator Neil Breslin passed the Legislature that will modernize the petitions used for election of candidates to the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany as well as the Board of Trustees of the Albany Public Library. This legislation will eliminate several archaic requirements currently contained in law such as requiring signers of the petition to list their current address and their address at the time of the previous general election. No other petition found in the Election Law or Education Law requires a voter to list both the current and former address.



Assemblymember Fahy joins Bethlehem Town Supervisor John Clarkson and others for Bike to Work Day outside the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy.

Assemblymember Fahy working for you

LED Streetlights Act of 2015

One of the most significant bills I have introduced this session that has passed the Legislature is the LED Streetlight Act of 2015 (A.6912-C/S.5205-B) which empowers the Public Service Commission to facilitate a transfer of ownership of inefficient streetlights to a municipality in order to upgrade streetlights to energy efficient and cost-saving LED lighting technology.

The legislation, also sponsored by Sen. Joseph Griffo (R-Rome), was prompted by a NYSERDA report noting if municipalities across the state owned and then upgraded their streetlights with LED technology, municipalities could achieve a savings of nearly \$100 million on annual street lighting costs. Outside of New York City, approximately 74 percent of streetlights are utility owned and the report identified lack of municipal ownership of streetlights as a major impediment to upgrading streetlights with LED technology.

This legislation will make a significant difference in reducing the utility bill of localities, in which the cost savings can be truly substantial. Through owning their own streetlights, villages, towns, and cit-

ies can pave their way to an energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly future.

Oil Train Petroleum Storage Surety

My Petroleum Storage Surety bill (A.7625/S.5751-A), which would ensure financial requirements are met when storing crude oil to prevent taxpayers from being responsible in instances of inadvertent crude oil shipment accidents or spills, passed overwhelmingly 137-2 in the Assembly but failed to move for a vote in the Senate.

The legislation would apply to crude oil stored at all bulk storage facilities in New York State – including the Port of Albany – and require financial security to meet all responsibilities for cleanup and decontamination costs associated with the accidental release of such oil.

Since I originally introduced this legislation just one year ago, the growth of crude oil transportation has continued to climb. Albany is host to the convergence of two major oil freight lines and has major storage facilities at its port. We have serious work to do in the Senate, and I will continue to advocate strongly to pass these critical safety measures in this important legislation in the coming year.

Did you know?

The Affordable Housing Partnership conducts a series of workshops on home buying, financial education, credit usage, and property management on a regular basis. You can register for these workshops by visiting www.ahphome.org.

Job Opportunities. Please visit my Assembly website to access links to government job listings and exam announcements.

Congratulations to recent Albany High School graduate Isabel Pottinger, who has been named a U.S. Presidential Scholar Program semifinalist. I was proud to have nominated Isabel, who was accepted early decision by Cornell University earlier this year. Isabel is one of 565 semifinalists selected from an initial pool of some three million high school seniors from throughout the country.



Assemblymember

Patricia A. Fahy

Reports to the People

Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy

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