



**COMMUNITY
NEWS**
from Assemblyman

**J. Gary
PRETLOW**

WINTER 2009

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

As we close 2009, we must reflect on the fact that these are difficult times in New York State in general and Yonkers and Mount Vernon in particular. As I write this letter, the state is experiencing a deficit of over \$4 billion in personal income tax revenue, not by any overspending by the state. The national recession and the deterioration of the job market, especially on Wall Street, have caused New York to lose thousands of jobs.

Through no fault of our own, we must, as a state, deal with this situation. In early December the state reduced budgeted expenditures by \$2.8 billion and the governor is delaying another \$2 billion in budgeted payments because there is not enough cash in the bank.

I will continue to lead the fight to preserve vital services for Mount Vernon and Yonkers. Both cities are overburdened with high taxes now and ways must be found to stabilize existing taxes and expand our tax base to spread the cost of services over a broader spectrum.

2010 will be a very difficult budget year, thankfully Wall Street revenues are beginning to increase, but not fast enough. My priorities continue to be education aid, health care and direct aid to localities.

As we approach 2010, I hope that this year will bring you health, peace and prosperity. Please remember the thousands of men and women serving in the military. We thank them for all that they do to protect our country from any harm or danger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "J. Gary Pretlow".

*J. Gary Pretlow
Member of Assembly*

ASSEMBLYMAN J. GARY PRETLOW

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INVESTING IN EDUCATION

One of the most important jobs I have as a state leader is to adequately fund our schools. I understand that a quality education, from kindergarten through college, is the key that opens the door to a bright future. This year, as in past years, I have persisted in getting Mount Vernon and Yonkers City School Districts, additional school aid. These increases fulfill my unwavering promise to make sure that each child receives a

sound, basic education and continues my deep commitment to education despite a daunting economic climate.

As we enter 2010, I will continue to ensure that the Mount Vernon and Yonkers school districts do not fall behind and that each child will have a sound education, one that will provide them with the tools and skills they will need to successfully compete for jobs in the 21st century.



A \$200,000 award to Mount Vernon City School District.



A visit to Hamilton Elementary School, after-school program.

Available in my office are activity packets for children in grades K-6. The activity packet teaches children all about the New York State Assembly as well as fun facts about New York State. If you are interested, please give my office a call and we will be glad to send one to your child/children.

HEALTHY NEW YORK

Last year I was instrumental in helping to create the New York Prescription Saver Card. The New York State Prescription Saver Card (NYPS) is a free Pharmacy Discount Card that is sponsored by the NYS Dept. of Health. The Saver Card offers participants significant discounts on thousands of prescription medications. Participants typically save more than 60 percent on generic drugs and 30 percent on brand name drugs. To be eligible for this card, you must be between the ages of 50 and 65 with an annual income of \$35,000 or less if single and \$50,000 or less if married. Medicaid recipients or those enrolled in the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program are not eligible for the Prescription Saver Card.



In addition to the NYPS, I fought for a budget that preserves critical aspects of the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) Program helping to keep prescription medication affordable for thousands of New York Seniors and thereby helping keep seniors healthy.

The enacted budget preserves more than \$50 million in “wrap-around” coverage, which pays for EPIC enrollees’ prescription drugs when the drugs are not covered by a Medicare part D plan. In addition to helping keep seniors healthy by giving them access to the medications they need, EPIC ultimately saves taxpayers millions of dollars a year by decreasing the number of emergency room visits and nursing home admissions.



UNCLAIMED FUNDS

The State of New York is holding billions of dollars of unclaimed funds and you may have a claim to a portion of these funds. Types of funds that can be claimed include but are not limited to: savings accounts, checking accounts, unclaimed checks, telephone utility deposits, rental security deposits, wages, etc.

For a complete list of funds that are unclaimed or to determine if you or anyone you know have funds that are held by the state, you can contact the Office of the State Comptroller at 1-800-221-9311 or access the web site at osc.state.ny.us.



AVOID FALLING VICTIM TO DEBT SETTLEMENT COMPANIES

Unfortunately, we are facing historically difficult times. According to the Department of Labor, the unemployment rate across the United States continues to rise, and New York State faces the same bleak picture. People who have never struggled to pay their bills are now forced to consider defaulting on their debt. Due to the rise in consumer debt, the number of debt settlement companies has tripled to 2,000 which has led to an increase of complaints to state attorney general offices about how these companies conduct business. In order to protect consumers, the Assembly passed a number of bills that will implement penalties for those who violate the law. These bills will help protect the debtors from unscrupulous debt collection practices, punish debt collectors who violate the law, and give the information they need to get back on firmer financial ground.

If you are interested in receiving information that outlines how you can avoid being deceived and what you can do to help put yourself on firmer financial ground, please call or write my office and we will be glad to mail you a brochure.



CLIP AND RETURN

Your questions or comments are important to me. If you have any concerns or issues you would like to discuss with me, please indicate and return to:

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow, 87TH District
6 Gramatan Avenue, Suite 407, Mt. Vernon, New York 10550
or
48 North Broadway, Yonkers, New York 10701

Name _____

Address _____

