

The 2025 New York State Legislative session is underway and here are the results of the Winter 2024 constituent survey. The ideas expressed in the responses will help guide my decisions in Albany and I appreciate your participation and thoughtful responses. It is important to note that the concerns or support raised in the responses may not necessarily reflect language that is in the bill that is being surveyed on. For example, in certain responses some concerns were raised that are actually addressed in the legislation. The responses are the opinions of constituents.

The level of participation this year was lower than previous years; we received 396 total responses including 205 electronic and 191 paper responses. For reference, last year we received 515 responses.

Please keep in mind that your input is always welcome year-round and you should always feel free to reach out to my office with any thoughts or comments.

If you have any questions, or wish to discuss these items further, please feel free to email me at mcdonaldj@nyassembly.gov or call my office at 518-455-4474.

Thank You and Happy New Year!

John T. McDonald III, RPh
Member of Assembly

Question 1: It is clear that affordability remains a concern for most, I want to know where the State should be prioritizing funding for your family. When considering how to allocate the State's financial resources, what are your three highest priorities for the state budget?

Out of the 346 constituents that responded to this question, please see below for the three highest budget priorities that came up most often:

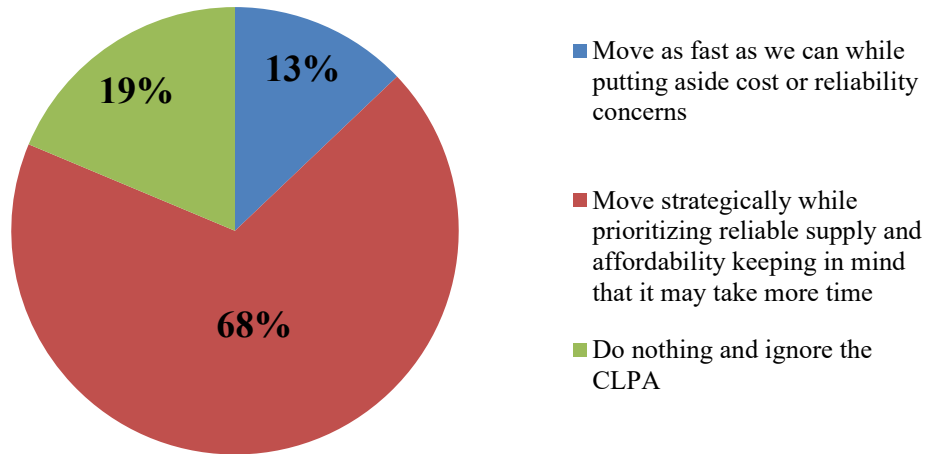
1. Increasing education funding and services.
2. Reducing taxes, as well as addressing the high cost of living.
3. Improving healthcare and senior care accessibility, affordability, and quality for all New Yorkers.

Question 2: As we continue to see the impacts of climate change, discussions have been ongoing as to what the next steps are beyond the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act ("CLCPA") that was enacted in to law in 2019 and how to fund the objectives of the law. There are multiple bills proposed that would implement a polluter fee structure for carbon and greenhouse gas emissions among other provisions. The fees would be split toward funding for community-based organizations located in or serving environmental justice communities, funding renewable energy projects, and funding energy rebates for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. In addition, a percentage of funds are committed toward offsetting the loss of fossil fuel-related jobs and revenues.

Concerns have been raised by some as to whether costs will be passed down to consumers (the bills do not require nor specify this), questions around the rebates for low to moderate income ratepayers, and general questions as to how the legislation will be implemented in practice including labor provisions in the bill.

Understanding that it is not possible to explain the various components of complicated bills, what approach do you think is best to help meet the goals of the CLCPA as well as shift our energy source from fossil fuel to renewable energy?

**What approach do you think is best to help meet the goals of the CLCPA as well as shift our energy source from fossil fuel to renewable energy?
(out of 380 constituents)**



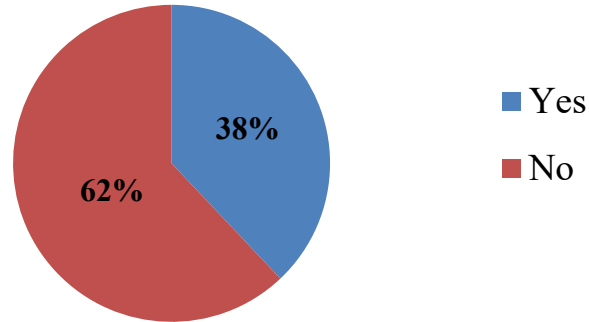
Among constituents who explained their answer, the most frequently expressed concern about meeting the goals of the CLCPA was the potential financial burden that transitioning from fossil fuels to green energy might have on consumers, including higher electricity rates and the cost of installing and operating technologies such as solar panels and EVs.

Some other concerns from constituents include concerns about energy reliability as we shift away from fossil fuels, the impact that the CLCPA will have on businesses, jobs, and industries, and the unintended impacts that new regulations and mandates will have low- to-moderate income households.

Question 3: The Extended Producer Responsibility Act (A.5322A) (“EPR”) is a proposed environmental bill that would require producers (person or companies that create the products) of consumer packaging and paper products to pay to recycle these materials. Producers are prohibited from selling or distributing any covered materials in New York unless they have an approved producer responsibility plan. The program will also create a funding mechanism to cover the costs of the program or cover the cost of a municipality for partaking in the program. The funding program will be structured in a way that includes incentives to reward producers for product design that reduce waste, increases the recyclability of the product, and removes toxics in packaging. Charges will also be adjusted based on the post-consumer recycled content rate of the covered material.

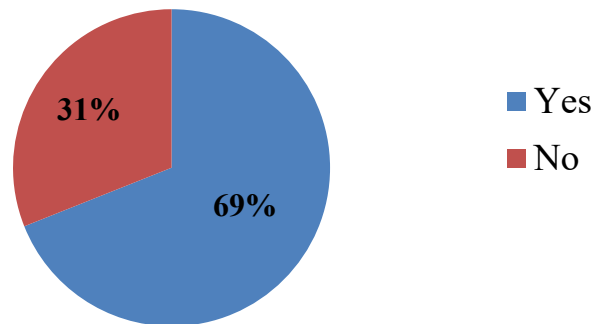
Question 3A: Are you familiar with the EPR legislation?

Are you familiar with the EPR legislation?
(out of 382 constituents)



Question 3B: Do you support or oppose passing the EPR into law?

Do you support passing the EPR into law?
(out of 361 constituents)



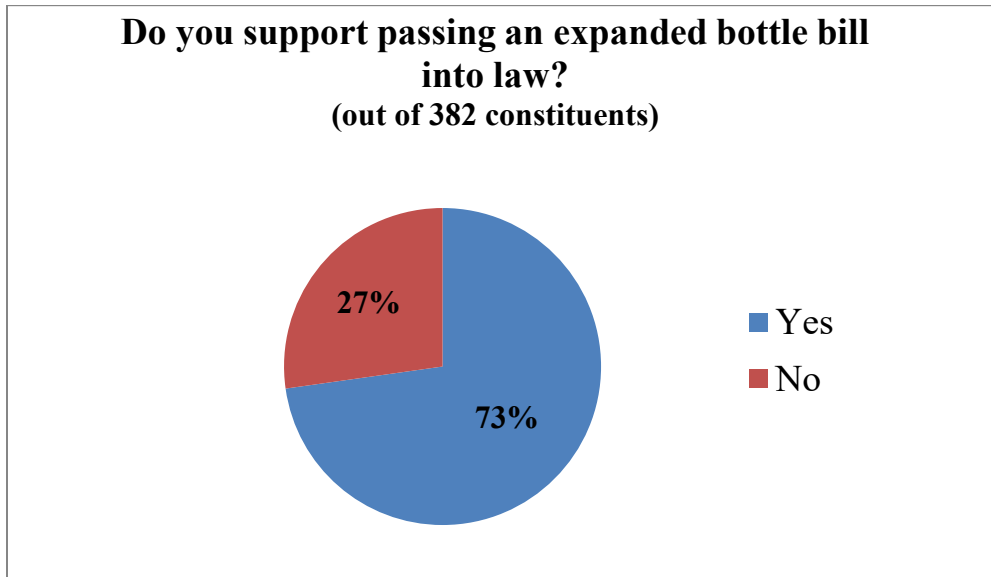
The three most common arguments in support of EPR were:

- *EPR shifts the responsibility for waste reduction from consumers to corporations.*
- *Overall reduction in pollution associated with sustainable packaging.*
- *Encourages the development and adoption of biodegradable, eco-friendly packaging materials.*

Those who do not support the passage of EPR into law are concerned about:

- *High implementation costs that will be passed down to consumers and small businesses.*
- *That EPR is yet another law that will lead to excessive government overreach on individuals and businesses.*
- *The effectiveness of EPR to substantially decrease waste and pollution.*

Question 4: Expanded bottle bill. There is a proposal for a bill (A.6353) that would expand the type of beverages eligible for a deposit and redemption under the current Bottle Bill and raise the deposit refund value to ten cents. Do you support passing an expanded bottle bill into law?



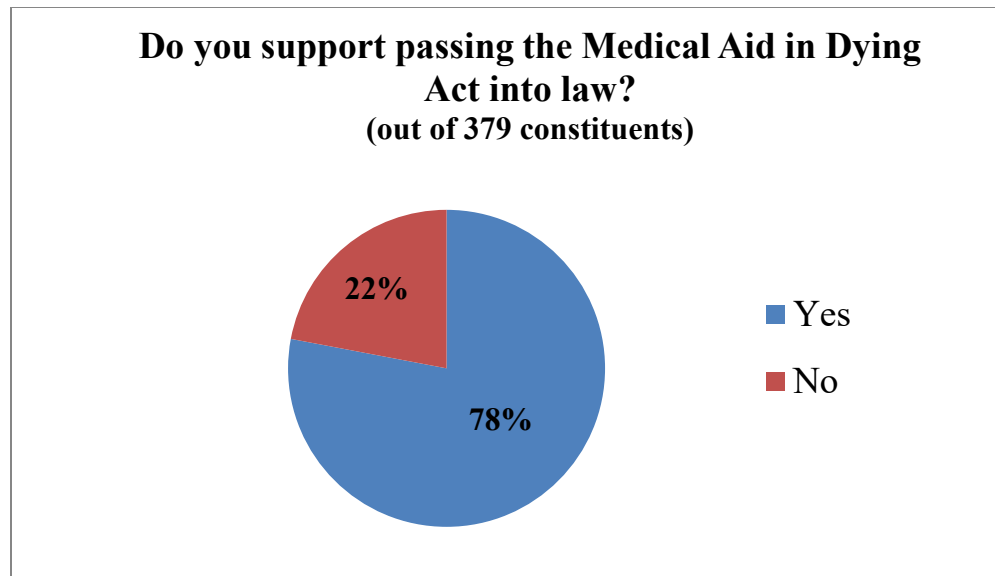
The two most common arguments in support for the Bottle Bill include:

- *Expansion of items that will be redeemable, which will incentivize redemption and reduce waste.*
- *Successful implementation of increased deposit refunds in other states, such as Maine and Michigan.*

The two most common arguments in opposition to the Bottle Bill include:

- *Raising the deposit or expanding the types of bottles a consumer can deposit will increase costs for consumers and businesses.*
- *Problems with the current redemption system, such as broken bottle deposit machines and the challenges that occur currently return bottles at redemption centers.*

Question 5: The New York Medical Aid in Dying Act would allow a mentally competent, terminally ill patient to choose to self-administer medication to end his or her life with additional protective measures in place. Do you support passing the Medical Aid in Dying Act into law?



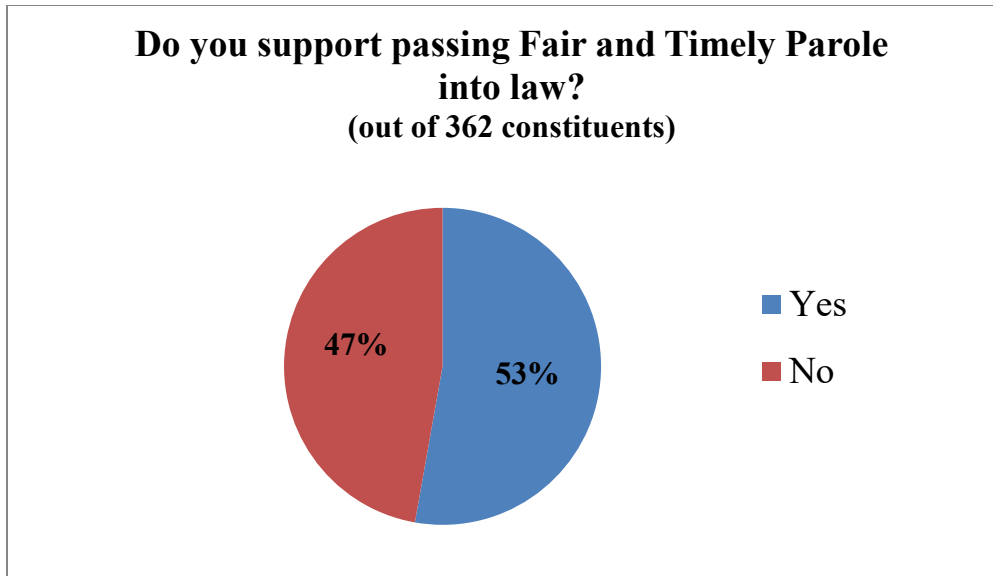
Among those who supported Medical Aid in Dying, the three most common arguments in support were:

- *Individuals should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies and lives, including the right to end their life if they are facing a terminal illness.*
- *Alleviating physical and emotional pain and suffering that terminally ill individuals face at the end of life.*
- *Compassionate and humane response to those in extreme pain and distress.*

In turn, among those who oppose MAID, the three most common concerns expressed were:

- *MAID contradicts their religious or moral beliefs.*
- *Passing this legislation could become a slippery slope, eventually being available to people who do not have a terminal illness or are not mentally competent to make end-of-life decisions.*
- *The process could be abused to exploit vulnerable individuals, such as those with disabilities or mental illness.*

Question 6: There is a bill proposed that is referred to as “Fair and Timely Parole.” This bill A.162 (Weprin) would require the board to release people to community supervision when their minimum period of incarceration has been served unless there is a clearly articulated current public safety reason to keep them in prison. On subsequent board appearances, there would be a presumption of release unless the board determines by a preponderance of evidence that an inmate is unlikely to avoid violating the law and that his or her release poses an unreasonable public safety risk. Do you support passing Fair and Timely Parole into law?

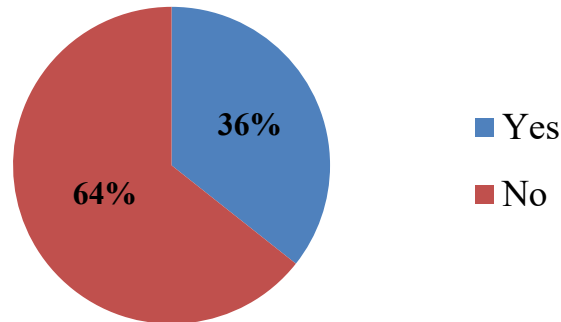


Those who support the passage of Fair and Timely parole explain that by reducing the prison population, it will reduce overcrowding, empower the state to redistribute funds for correctional facilities to other priorities, shift the criminal justice system from one who punishes individuals to one that aids in their rehabilitation, and promote second chances for those who have served their minimum sentence and pose no threat to public safety.

However, a sizeable portion of constituents oppose Fair and Timely parole because they say it threatens public safety, undermines accountability for criminal behavior, and raises concerns about appropriate supervision of parolees after release.

Question 7: The Raise the Age (RTA) law changed the age that a child can be prosecuted as an adult to 18 years of age in criminal cases in New York State. Prior to RTA, New York was one of two remaining states to hold 16-year-olds criminally responsible. There are some who have called for changes to the RTA law due to some ambiguity and the shift in these cases to Family Courts which has led to youth cases being prosecuted in Family Court, where the individual is often released to their family instead of incarceration. In some instances, they are retained in a youth facility while awaiting court appointments. Do you support changing the Raise the Age law?

**Do you support keeping the Raise the Age changes in place?
(out of 345 constituents)**



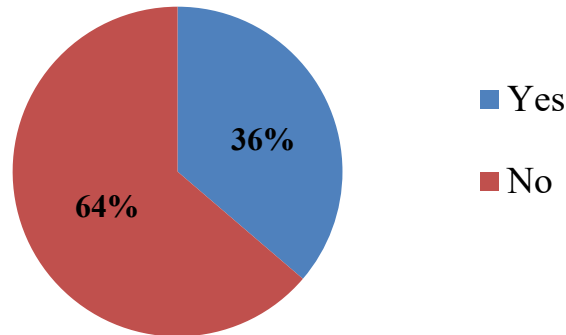
Most constituents oppose keeping the Raise the Age (RTA) changes in place and expressed the following concerns:

- *RTA changes do not hold 16- and 17-year-olds accountable for crimes, particularly those that are violent in nature.*
- *The state's Family Court system is not adequately equipped to handle serious criminal cases.*
- *16- and 17-year-olds are mature enough to understand the consequences that their actions will have on their future, their families, and their communities.*

The third of constituents that support keeping RTA's changes in place, expressed that Raise the Age changes will allow youth to have second chances and increase alternatives to incarceration such as employment, community service, and counseling.

Question 8: There are groups who are advocating for and legislation that would allow early release of all elderly New York inmates, irrespective of the nature of the crime that they were convicted of who are 55 years of age and older out of prisons and onto early parole. Do you support allowing the parole board to evaluate all inmates who are 55 years old and older for early release from prisons? Note: the proposed bill does not mandate release but allows the Board of Parole to make the evaluations and the discretion to make the decisions.

**Do you support requiring the parole board to evaluate all inmates who are 55 years old and older for early release from prisons?
(out of 364 constituents)**



Most constituents oppose Elder Parole expressed the following:

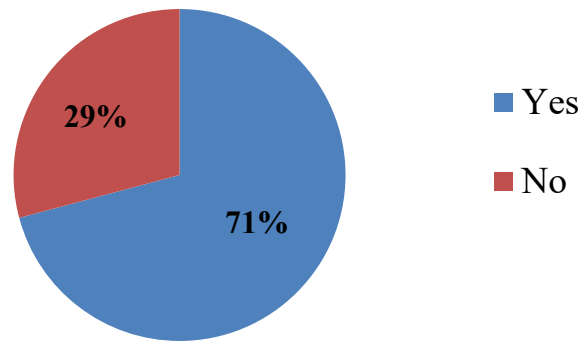
- *They believe that the nature of the crime should be considered if parole is granted, not the age of the offender. Many also oppose parole for those who committed serious crimes such as murder, rape, or child molestation.*
- *Are concerned that individuals, even at an older age, may still pose a danger to society and re-offend.*
- *Explain that individuals should serve their original sentence to make the parole system fairer for all.*

A third of constituents support Elder Parole, mainly for the following two reasons:

- *Individuals can change and mature as they grow older, which decreases their danger to society.*
- *The cost of incarceration and overcrowding could be reduced.*

Question 9: Migrants and asylum seekers are currently unable to seek expedited work authorizations from the federal government. An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking protection from danger in his or her home country. Asylum seekers cannot apply for protection until they arrive in the United States. Crossing an international border for asylum is not illegal and the asylum process can take years to complete. Allowing expedited work permits would allow asylum seekers to address some of the workforce challenges that businesses in NYS are facing and would allow them to obtain Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN) to allow them to pay NYS income taxes. There is a bill in NYS that proposes a temporary state work permit system, even though the authority to grant the permits is considered a federal authority. Do you support NYS legislation to allow asylum seekers to work in New York State and allow them to obtain tax ID numbers and pay NYS income taxes?

**Do you support NYS legislation to allow asylum seekers to work in New York State and allow them to obtain tax ID numbers and pay NYS income taxes?
(out of 391 constituents)**



The top 3 most common reasons why constituents support legislation that would allow asylum seekers to work in NYS and allow them to obtain ITIN numbers and pay NYS income taxes are:

- *By allowing asylum seekers to work and pay taxes, they will be able to fill critical labor shortages, especially in industries with a high demand for workers. Consequently, this will benefit our local and state economy.*
- *Asylum seekers will be able to become productive members of society and support their communities, continuing the tradition of New York being a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive state.*
- *It would address the challenges resulting from a broken federal immigration system while allowing those who are already here to begin contributing to the tax base and their local communities.*

The top 3 most common reasons why constituents oppose this potential legislation are:

- *Immigration is a federal issue, and state involvement in allowing asylum seekers the ability to work and pay taxes may cause unintended legal challenges and additional costs to U.S. citizens and permanent residents.*
- *Continued incentivization of illegal immigration, overwhelming our already strained immigration system.*
- *Limiting job opportunities for American workers, especially in industries that are facing labor shortages.*

Question 10: There has been discussion around economic development spending and how we can improve how the state invests in funding projects and targeting incentives to be the most impactful. Some examples include: Eliminating Local Development Corporations and empowering Industrial Development Agencies with the authority to give grants and loans; Tax

credits; Grants; Increased transparency in spending. Which proposals, if any, do you support as economic development spending reforms and why?

Out of the 279 constituents that answered this question, please see below for the top five proposals that came up most often:

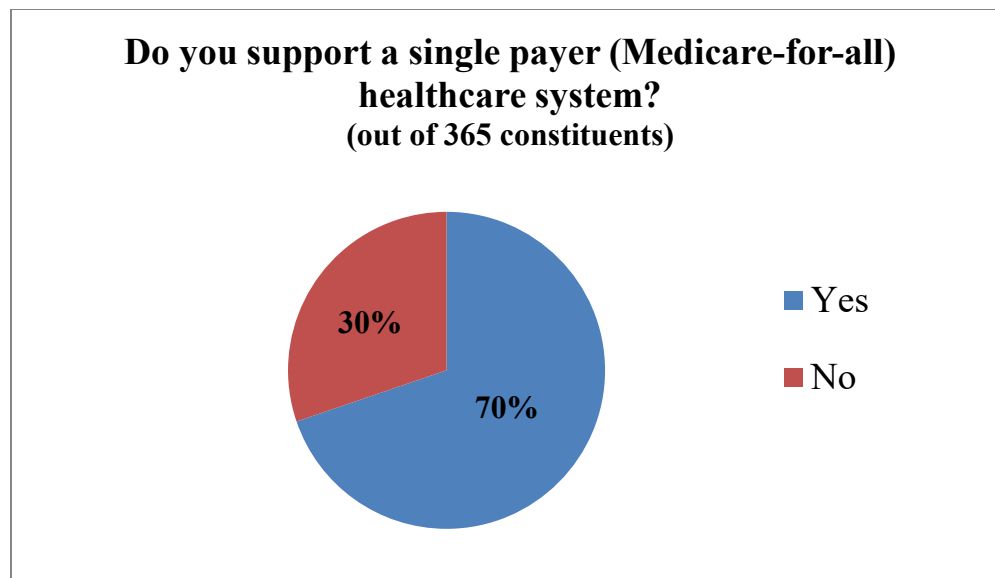
1. Increased transparency in spending, including granting public access to spending data, expanding FOIL to include all economic development entities, and audit requirements.
2. Directing economic development funding away from large corporations towards small businesses, while providing small businesses with incentives such as tax credits and grants.
3. Eliminating Local Development Corporations (LDCs).
4. Holding businesses accountable for promises they make in exchange for economic development incentives, such as legally binding companies to conditions like job creation and community development.
5. Balancing gentrification efforts in municipalities while preserving local heritage, culture, and affordable housing.

Question 11: The burden of student loan debt has a profound impact on the economy and not only impacts the financial decisions of the student borrowers but also the parents and guardians who may assist in financing higher education. Some examples of proposals include: Tax credits for parents and borrowers; Low interest loans; Expanded loan forgiveness programs; Better refinancing options; Government subsidies for education; or Increased consumer protections for borrowers. What do you believe would be the most beneficial in addressing the student loan crisis and why?

Out of the 356 constituents that answered this question, please see below for the top five proposals that came up most often:

1. Lowering interest rates on student loans
2. Addressing the root cause of student loan debt by reducing tuition and administrative costs at colleges.
3. Offering and expanding loan forgiveness programs, including Public Service Loan Forgiveness and for service-oriented professions like nurses, teachers, and doctors.
4. Expand grant and scholarship programs like TAP to make education more affordable and accessible for students particularly from lower- and middle-income families.
5. Incentivize attendance at trade and vocational schools as well as community colleges.

Question 12: There is a bill (A.7897 Paulin) proposing a single payer healthcare system in New York. The legislation proposes to pay for the program through a progressive payroll tax for individuals and business. There would also be a graduated tax on income. Those with taxable incomes of \$50,000 or less would be exempt if enrolled in Medicare, those with taxable incomes of \$25,000 or less would be exempt overall. Taxes would be scaled up as enrollment grows. The federal government would need to grant a waiver to use federal funds for a single payer plan as well, which makes a program contingent on the waiver being granted. Do you support a single payer (Medicare-for-all) healthcare system?



Among the “why” responses, those that support a single-payer healthcare system explain that they believe healthcare is a human right and access to high-quality healthcare should not be predicated on one’s ability to pay, and single-payer system might lower overall cost, waste, and inefficiency within the current healthcare system.

Those who oppose the implementation of a single-payer healthcare system mention that they are most concerned about the ramifications of a single-payer system on their taxes, have lack of trust in government when it comes to administering healthcare, and contend that multiple options for private insurance reduces overall costs and improves healthcare services.

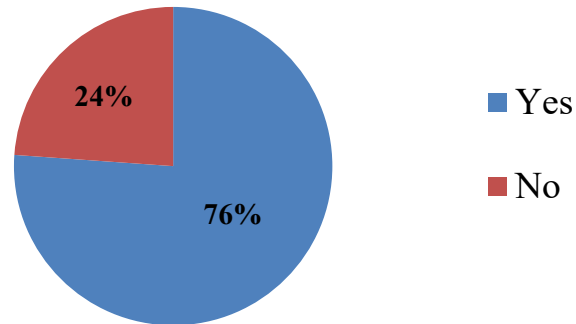
Question 13: Many families struggle to find affordable and reliable childcare and childcare centers struggle to retain staff due to salary constraints. What do you think would be helpful to address the current childcare crisis?

Out of the 317 constituents that responded to this question, please see below for the top 5 topics that came up the most often:

1. Increased government subsidies and/or tax credits to make childcare more affordable for families and to support childcare businesses.
2. Improved pay for childcare workers to reduce turnover and staff shortages.
3. Flexible work options for parents, including shorter work weeks and work from home opportunities.
4. Expanding Universal Pre-K.
5. Encourage businesses to provide on-site childcare or childcare vouchers.

Question 14: Vacation rental websites, such as Airbnb, HomeAway, and VRBO, are online marketplaces that enable home-sharing. Provided that they are required to pay all related taxes and are compliant with current building codes, would you support these types of businesses in New York?

**Would you support allowing home sharing in
New York?
(out of 356 constituents)**

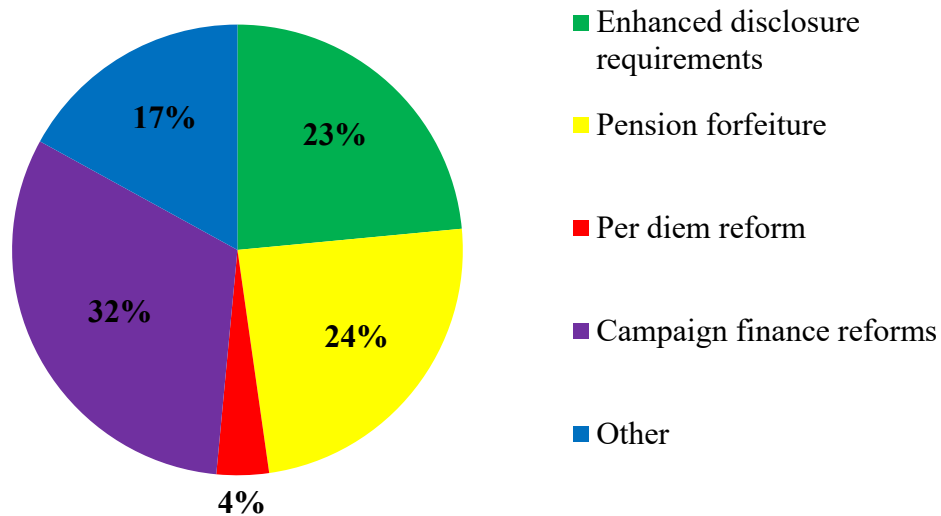


Most constituents who answered this question support home-sharing opportunities (like VRBO and Airbnb) since they provide supplemental income to homeowners, contribute to the local economy by attracting tourists who then spend money at local restaurants, shops, and attractions, and increases affordable short-term housing options.

The biggest concern of the few that oppose home-sharing is that home-sharing increases rental prices and reduces affordable housing, particularly in urban areas.

Question 15: Despite additional charges of corruption in politics there has been little progress in the way of meaningful ethics reform. What in your opinion is the most important ethics reform measure that New York should enact?

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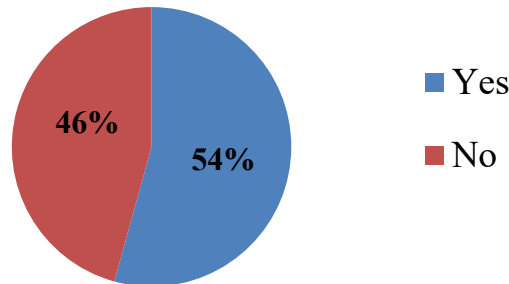
For constituents who answered “other” to this question, the most important ethics reform to them that New York should enact centered around term limits.

For constituents who answered “why” to this question, some overarching themes include:

- Importance of reforms that will rebuild faith in government and ensure politicians are held accountable for their actions in office (e.g., pension forfeiture).*
- Taxpayers have a right to know campaign income and expenditures to deter their suspicion of conflicts of interest.*
- Reforming the per diem system will ensure public funds are being used responsibly and intentionally.*
- Addressing “Big money” in politics (e.g., political action committees) and how it may lead to corruption and career politicians.*

Question 16: Term Length - Currently, New York State legislators are elected to a two-year term. Would you support a constitutional amendment that would increase in the length of a term to four years?

**Would you support a constitutional amendment
that would increase in the length of a term to
four years?
(Out of 372 constituents)**

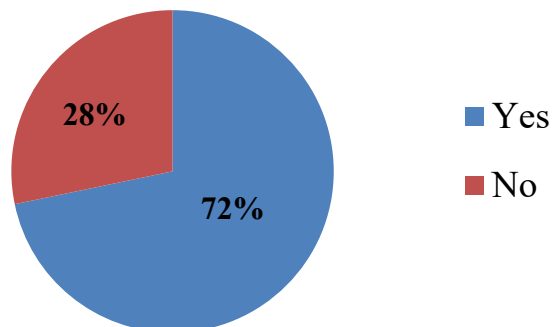


Among the “why” responses, those who support a potential constitutional amendment to increase the length of a term to four years mentioned that a longer term would reduce the time legislators spend campaigning and fundraising for elections, which ultimately will allow them to focus more on introducing and advocating for legislation on behalf of their constituents.

Those who oppose this constitutional amendment explain that two-year terms serve as a performance evaluation, and fear that longer terms will reduce legislator accountability.

Question 17: Term Limits—Currently, New York State legislators are not subject to term limits, which means they can run for an unlimited number of two-year terms. Should legislators be subject to term limits?

**Should legislators be subject to term limits?
(Out of 375 constituents)**

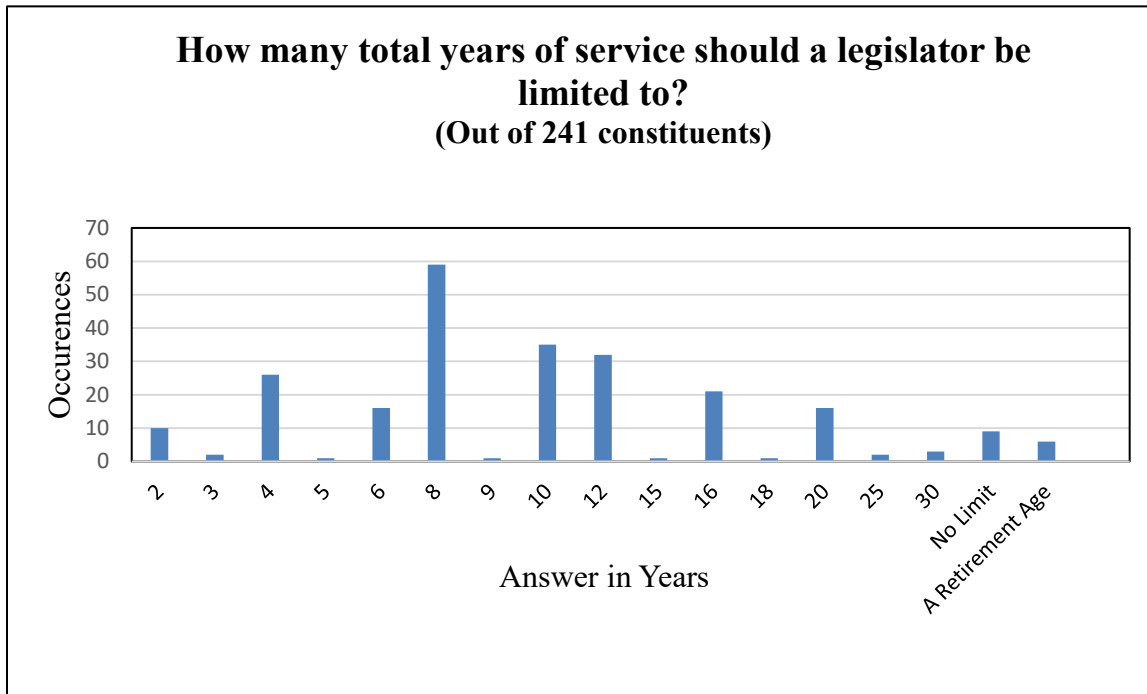


Among the “why” responses, those who support term limits explained that term limits would

decrease corruption and unethical behavior in government, encourage fresh ideas and diverse representation, and promote the ideals of public service.

Those who oppose term limits generally feel that the loss of experience and expertise of long-serving legislators would hinder effective governance.

Question 17A: How many total years of service should a legislator be limited to?



Question 18: Supporting small businesses is a priority of mine, and I frequently hear about the need for regulatory reforms to remove onerous burdens on small businesses to allow them to grow and succeed. What do you think is the biggest impediment for small businesses and why?

Out of the 315 constituents that answered this question, below are the top five biggest impediments that constituents think small businesses face:

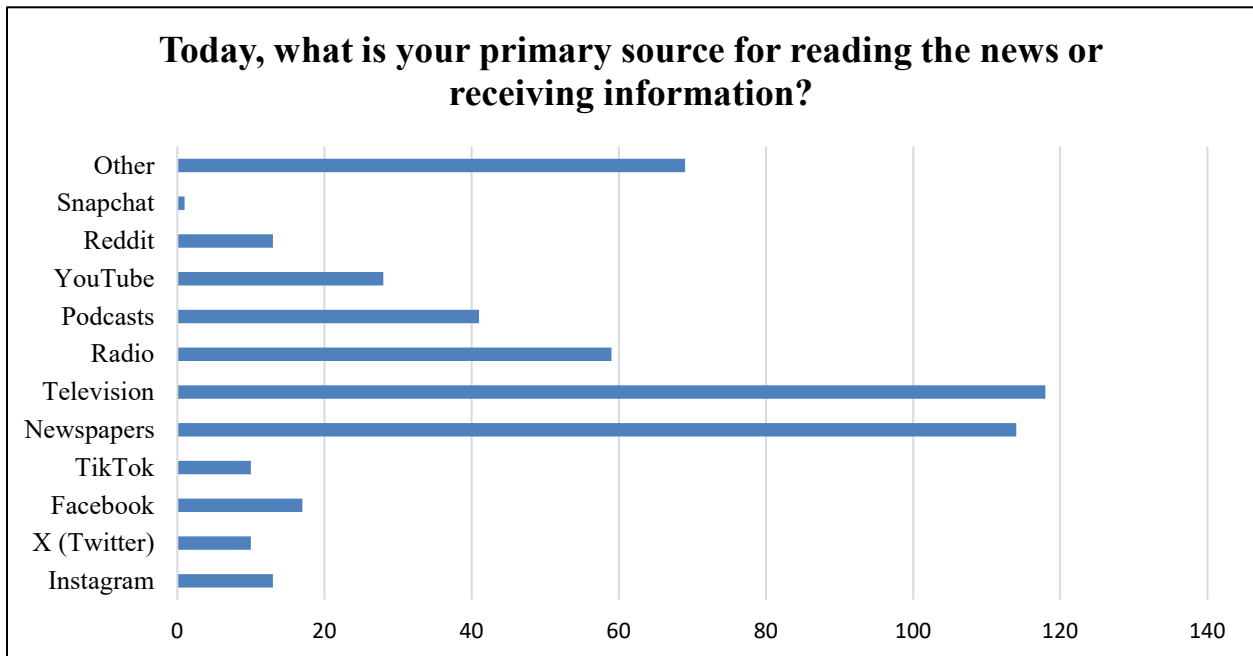
1. High state, local, and sales taxes and burdensome and complex regulations.
2. Competition from large corporations such as Walmart and Amazon.
3. Increasing operating and employee costs (rent, utilities, supplies, employee benefits, etc.).
4. Public safety concerns (e.g., theft and vandalism).
5. Access to financial support, especially for start-ups (e.g., grants, loans, financing).

Question 19: The unfortunate reality of the opioid/heroin epidemic is that many of us have been touched by it in some shape or form. What obstacles do you see in prevention, treatment, and recovery? What if any thoughts do you have on how we can be more effective in battling this growing problem?

Out of the 301 constituents that answered this question, please see below for the top five most common thoughts constituents had on how we can be more effective in battling the opioid/heroin epidemic:

1. Early and ongoing education about the dangers of drug use to reduce initial use and prevent dependency.
2. Expanding access to effective treatment programs.
3. Increased funding for drug rehabilitation centers and mental health services, particularly for those who are underinsured, uninsured, or live in historically marginalized communities.
4. Reducing stigma surrounding addiction, which will empower individuals with a substance use disorder to seek help without judgement.
5. Promoting harm reduction measures, such as increased access to Narcan.

Question 20: The world of media has changed rapidly just in the past few decades. Today, what is your primary source for reading the news or receiving information? Please choose just one.



For those who answered “other” to this question, their primary source for news and information were:

1. News aggregators, like Google News and Apple News
2. News websites like Reuters and the Associated Press
3. Newer social media platforms like BlueSky.

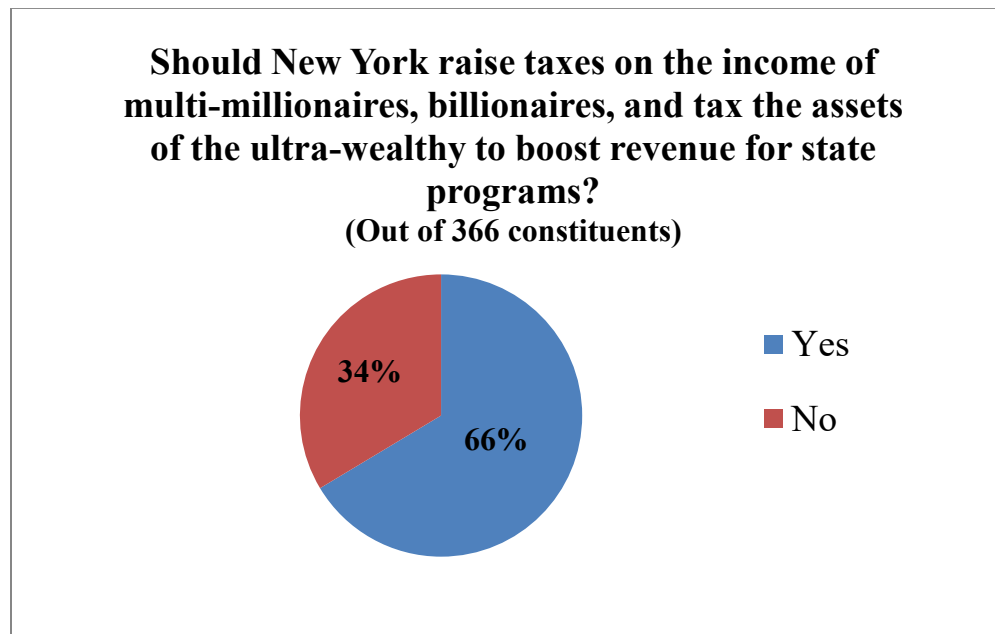
Question 21: Which specific source of news do you trust the most? Some examples include: Friends on social media, influencers on social media, Major news outlets (e.g. ABC, Fox News, MSNBC, CNN), local news (print or digital). Please be as specific as possible.

Out of the 375 constituents that responded to this question, please see below for the top five most trusted news sources amongst our constituents:

1. NPR
2. The New York Times
3. Local news outlets (i.e., Times Union, WNYT, etc.)
4. BBC
5. Associated Press (AP)

Respondents commonly mentioned that they cross-reference their news to confirm stories. Other less commonly submitted news sources included various podcasts, the Guardian, Politico, Ground News aggregator, Twitch, and Bloomberg.

Question 22: New York has faced budget deficits in the past and has lost population in the last few years. In those last few years, personal income tax increased for individuals making more than \$1 million and taxes increased on corporations whose business income was more than \$5 million. Should New York raise taxes on the income of multi-millionaires, billionaires, and tax the assets of the ultra-wealthy to boost revenue for state programs (i.e. Medicaid, Pre-K to K-12 education, transportation, etc.)?



The top three reasons why constituents believe that NYS should raise taxes on the income and assets of the wealthy include:

- *The wealthy should “pay their fair share” and alleviate the tax burden on lower- and middle-income individuals and families.*
- *Multi-millionaires and billionaires can afford to pay higher taxes.*
- *Reduces income inequality and supports community programs, infrastructure, and social services.*

For those who do not support this measure, the top concerns that they expressed are:

- *Higher taxes will drive wealthy individuals and businesses out of NYS, reducing tax revenue and increasing unemployment.*
- *The belief that the wealthy are more knowledgeable about tax loopholes.*
- *New York State already uses tax revenue to fund programs and promote policies that are ineffective and unpopular.*

We received 269 responses to the open comment section that asked what issues you thought were most important to be addressed this session. We appreciate your responses. Please see below for the top 5 topics that came up the most often:

1. **Economic Concerns:** Constituents are worried about high taxes and general affordability contributing to a high cost of living which they say may be driving residents out of the state. They are also concerned about a housing crisis in which they mention lack of affordable housing, tenant protections and homelessness support.
2. **Climate and Environment:** Constituents want to prioritize climate change action, renewable energy adoption and waste reduction. Common suggestions from responses included clean energy solutions, funding for environmental protection, and sustainable material use.
3. **Public Safety and Justice:** Constituents are asking for stronger measures to address crime. They commonly mention bail reform, reducing recidivism, better police training, addressing systemic biases, and re-criminalizing misdemeanor offenses.
4. **Healthcare and Social Services:** Constituents mention high costs of healthcare as a major concern. Many mention a reformed single-payer system. Constituents also ask for better funding for disability, senior, and mental health support.
5. **Human Rights and Equality:** Constituents mentioned protecting LGBTQ+, gender equality, and reproductive rights amid future uncertainty. They also commonly asked for systemic inequities be addressed as well as an ensured balanced representation and support for marginalized communities.