



# ASSEMBLYMEMBER PATRICIA A. FAHY



## Legislative & Community Report to the 109<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Dear Neighbors,*

*I'm proud to represent you in the New York State Assembly and will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of Albany, Bethlehem, Guilderland, and New Scotland. Inside this edition of the Legislative and Community Report to the 109th Assembly District are updates from the passage of the 2016-2017 state budget and highlights from the past few months within the district.*

*After weeks of debate and negotiations, on April 1, the Senate and Assembly approved **the State Budget Plan of \$146.7 billion with historic policy agreements**, such as minimum wage increases and Paid Family Leave, and record-setting investments in education, families, college affordability, transportation, water infrastructure, and the environment, while remaining within a two percent budget growth rate. In addition, the Governor thankfully included, and the Assembly retained, a critical \$12.5 million spin up of the City of Albany's 19a PILOT, a one-year fix to address the city's structural budget deficit. The multi-year investment in transportation alone – \$27 billion upstate and \$27 billion downstate for a total of \$54 billion – will create thousands of construction-related jobs around the state, including a long awaited \$50 million investment to re-do Exit 4 to the Albany Airport.*

*Although the budget included many tradeoffs and disappointments, including a host of programs receiving little or no increased funding, such as Upstate Pre-K, child care, adult literacy, Aid to Municipalities (AIM), indigent legal services and more, it is a compromise document with a number of positive, far reaching agreements. It is worthy to note, too, that widely opposed proposals, such as changes to state employee retiree health benefits, were not included in the budget.*

*As always, I am committed to making our region a safe and healthy place to live, work, and raise a family, with a focus on building an economy that generates good jobs and an education system that prepares our children for a bright future. Your thoughts and input on each of these important issues is valuable to me and I welcome your feedback. Please feel free to join me at a future community event, contact my office by phone or e-mail, and sign up for our regular e-mail updates by sending a note to [fahyp@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:fahyp@assembly.state.ny.us).*

Assemblymember  
PATRICIA A. FAHY

## SPRING 2016 BUDGET UPDATE

**I**n addition to the highlights above, the 2016-2017 budget Agreement includes a total State Operating Fund of \$96.2 billion, which holds state spending growth rate to two percent over last year. School aid jumped a record 6.5 percent to an overall \$24.8 billion, while Medicaid received \$18.5 billion, a 3.4 percent growth and still within an overall two percent cap. Higher Education has been allocated \$7.2 billion overall, a two percent growth rate.

**Increasing Wages for New Yorkers** • The minimum wage was by far the most controversial part of the budget and resulted in historic increases while reflecting the disparate costs of living and economic realities in various regions of the state. As a result, there will be different phase-in periods for upstate and downstate communities. In New York City, the minimum wage will increase to \$11 at the end of 2016, followed by \$2 increases each year after, reaching \$15 an hour on Dec. 31, 2018, with New York City businesses with 10 or fewer employees receiving a slightly slower phase-in.

For Upstate, the wage will increase to \$9.70 at the end of 2016, followed by \$0.70 increases each year and reach \$12.50 on Dec. 31, 2020, and then be increased to \$15 according to an indexed schedule set by the Division of Budget and the Department of Labor. Again, this was the most controversial part of the budget, which caused repeated delays in an effort to achieve a three-way agreement that could be passed in the Senate (the Assembly had already passed a more ambitious proposal). For tipped workers, the budget pegs their wage at two-thirds of the minimum wage rounded either to the nearest five cents or to \$7.50, whichever is higher.

Annual studies will be conducted by the Division of Budget starting in 2019 to gauge economic impact and, should the economy falter, it may determine if a temporary suspension of the wage increases is warranted. Addressing the increased costs of direct care agencies dependent on state aid will be a key priority next year.

*Continued on page 2*



The fire at Tawasentha Park's pool house was a devastating loss for the Town of Guilderland. The Town moved forward with a new pool house. Assemblymember Fahy joined Senator Amedore, Town Supervisor Barber, and fellow town officials in breaking ground for the new facility. This was made possible in part through state funding Assemblymember Fahy helped secure.

**Paid Family Leave** • The budget includes a historic Paid Family Leave (PFL) provision that, when fully phased in, will be the most generous in the nation. This is a historic achievement, particularly given that the Assembly began passing versions of the PFL in 1997. PFL will allow employees up to 12 weeks of paid leave per year to care for a new child or family member in need (after six months of employment). The measure will be funded by employees through a small weekly employee contribution and offer up to 67 percent of an employee's salary during their absence, not to exceed 67 percent of the statewide average weekly wage. The policy will be implemented at a gradual rate, starting in 2018 with eight weeks of paid leave offered at 50 percent of weekly income; in 2019, the benefit will increase to 10 weeks, and in 2021, employees will be able to take 12 weeks of paid leave at the full two-thirds of weekly pay. An estimated **6.4 million private sector employees** will be eligible for this program.



The Albany Police Athletic League, Inc. stopped by the Legislative Office Building, meeting with Assemblymembers Fahy and McDonald. PAL continues to be a great collaboration between law enforcement and community youth.

**K-12 Education** • The budget increases education aid by \$1.47 billion – or 6.5 percent – for a total of \$24.8 billion, representing the largest percent investment in education in New York history. This includes an increase in Foundation Aid of \$627 million and provides \$433 million to fully eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA).

Additionally, the budget allocates \$175 million to transform struggling and high-needs schools into Community Schools and \$20 million for My Brother's Keeper.

*The education budget also includes:*

- \$47 million to unfreeze the reimbursement of expense-based aids;
- \$1 million for Career and Technical Education (CTE);
- \$1 million increase in bilingual education services funding, for a total of \$15.5 million;
- \$14.3 million for Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers;
- \$1 million in additional funding for adult literacy education, for a total of \$7.2 million and;
- \$500,000 to offset AP test fees for economically disadvantaged youth.

**Higher Education** • The budget ensures that tuition at SUNY schools will not be raised during the coming academic year. The budget also provides an increase of \$18 million in operating funds for SUNY.



Assemblymember Fahy joined the board of Capital CarShare, fellow elected officials, and community leaders in celebrating the carsharing non-profit's new office on Lark Street in Albany.



Assemblymember Fahy joined Bishop Emeritus Hubbard, Congressman Tonko, Senator Breslin, Albany School Board President Bruce, and many more for the African Spring Dinner to support funding for children and school projects in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

**Community Colleges** • The budget includes \$13.3 million in support for SUNY community colleges for an increase of \$100 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, for a total of \$2,697 per FTE student. The budget also restores \$1.5 million for Small Business Development Centers at community colleges.

**Strengthening College Opportunity Programs** •

The budget provides \$23.8 million, a 20 percent increase over last year, for the college opportunity programs including:

- Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP): \$35.5 million, an increase of \$5.9 million;
- Educational Opportunity Program (EOP): \$32.2 million, an increase of \$5.4 million;
- Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP): \$15.8 million, an increase of \$2.6 million.

**Middle Class Tax Relief** • In order to provide additional assistance to working and middle-income families, the budget will cut personal income taxes by \$270 million in 2018. These tax savings will increase to approximately \$3 billion by 2025 when the middle-class tax rate reductions are fully phased in. The cuts would incrementally reduce the middle-class tax rates for single filers earning between \$13,000 and \$200,000, and married couples earning between \$26,000 and \$300,000. Tax rates for brackets in these ranges would decrease from the current 5.9 percent, 6.45 percent and 6.65 percent to 5.5 percent, 5.5 percent and six percent respectively, over eight years. These new tax cuts will benefit up to six million New Yorkers.

**Environment, Water and Sewer Infrastructure** •

Among the most significant investments in the budget is \$500 million to critical environmental programs, including \$200 million in additional funds for water and sewer infrastructure improvements.

The remaining \$300 million is allocated for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which is the largest funding commitment in the history of this very successful, multi-faceted program. More than \$120 million of these EPF funds will pay for initiatives that prevent and identify water contamination, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, eradicate invasive species, and address climate change.

The budget provides \$1.5 million for water testing, including for lead in schools, to protect public health and \$12 million for combating the spread of invasive species. An additional \$250,000 was obtained for the Tivoli Lake Preserve in Albany.

The \$200 million funding increase for water infrastructure improvements will expand the state's ability to provide grants to municipalities that need to upgrade, repair or improve their water treatment facilities and might not otherwise have sufficient financial resources.

For the first time ever, the budget allocates \$14 million to create a Climate Change Account within the EPF. The account will bolster the state's efforts to address greenhouse gas reductions, flood mitigation and assist municipalities with climate change planning to help ensure communities are prepared for extreme weather events.



Assemblymember Fahy joins state and local officials at a press conference at the Harold L. Joyce Albany County Office Building in support of Rebuild NY, in an effort to invest in the state's infrastructure.

**Public infrastructure and transportation** • A significant funding increase of \$1.04 billion was made to the Department of Transportation's five-year capital plan for a total of \$27 billion over five years. The DOT capital plan also will provide an additional, record setting \$100 million over four years for non-MTA downstate and upstate transit systems (including CDTA). The Upstate Caucus was successful in obtaining a late, but significant \$5 million increase in operating funds for non-MTA transit systems.

Although the Assembly's budget resolution included my initiative for an unprecedented \$20 million in bike and pedestrian infrastructure funding (with over 40 Assemblymembers supporting this initiative), it was not included in the final agreement. We will continue to look for alternative support.

**Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program** • In one of the more significant increases in the budget, the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) will assist local governments in paying for critical road and bridge improvements in order to ensure their safety and reliability. The budget increases funding by \$400 million over four years for the CHIPS.



Assemblymember Fahy joined federal, state, and local officials at the Altamont Free Library Gala. This year, James and Wanda Gardner, former longtime owners of the Altamont Enterprise, were honored.

**Anti-poverty Initiative targeting Upstate urban areas** • The budget includes \$1.5 million to support an Anti-Poverty Initiative in Albany along with a number of other upstate urban areas and modeled on a wide-ranging, neighborhood intensive initiative in Rochester.

**Seniors** • The budget restores \$951,000 for Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs, and provides an additional \$700,000. NORCs allow seniors to remain in their homes and communities by providing support services.

**Public health** • The budget restores critical funding for public health programs and provides funding for health care infrastructure programs and \$2.9 million for restorations, including support for HIV/AIDS programs, family planning services and the community health advocates program. In addition, the budget provides important Medicaid funding, including funding to offset the costs of medications and long-term care.



Joined by legislative colleagues and transportation advocates in Albany, Assemblymember Fahy discussed increased transportation funding and commitment to public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure improvements as part of the Assembly's one-house budget resolution.

**Library investments** • For the first time in 10 years, an additional \$5 million has been added for the Library Construction Grant Programs. With more good news for local libraries, the operating aid funds will increase by \$4 million over last year.



Assemblymember Fahy and Khadijah Ndiaye, a University at Albany student who interned in the office in the Spring 2016 semester, took the opportunity to snap a photo with UAlbany's Damien the Great Dane for 'Mascot Day at the Capitol'.

**Heroin and opioid abuse** • To help combat the heroin and opioid epidemic in our state and help protect public health, a total of \$28 million was appropriated – a significant increase over last year's budget.

**Veterans** • Veterans and their families have made invaluable sacrifices for our country, and so we must support veterans and ensure they have access to vital resources. This year's state budget provides \$1.62 million in restorations and additional funding for veterans over the executive proposal.

*For more in-depth budget coverage, please visit my website or for any specific questions, do not hesitate to contact my office.*



Assemblymember Fahy joined town and county officials and residents for the cross-street move of the Hilton Barn in New Scotland. This move was made possible in part from state funding Assemblymember Fahy helped secure for the Town.

## Assemblymember Fahy working for you

### Remainder of Session Legislative Issues

As we finalize this newsletter, we are moving into the post-budget part of the legislative session and much work remains to finalize a host of major bills that I am sponsoring or supporting. A few of key bills are noted below.

**Indigent legal services** • This year, Senator DeFrancisco and I introduced legislation to provide state funding of indigent legal services (ILS) by reimbursing counties for providing these important services. A version of this bill was successfully included in the Assembly budget resolution but not in the final budget agreement. In the landmark *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision of over 50 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it is a fundamental right to be represented by counsel in all criminal proceedings. The state implemented this by mandating counties pay for the defense. This bill would provide counties with significant fiscal mandate relief by providing a phased-in state fiscal takeover of indigent defense services.

**Building aid for Community Schools** • In an effort to promote the community schools model, I introduced legislation also sponsored by Senator Farley to increase state building aid funds in struggling and persistently struggling schools for shared spaces and classrooms and enable them to increase parent and community engagement. A version of this bill was successfully included in the Assembly budget resolution but not in the final budget agreement. This bill addresses an out-of-date model for state building aid and expands it to provide support to struggling schools while providing relief for the local property taxpayer.

**Ethics** • A series of ethics reform that I cosponsored have passed the Assembly and await passage in the Senate, including closing the “LLC loophole” (for limited liability companies ) to provide greater transparency and severely limit the level of contribution; and limits on outside income for legislators. Additional reforms to be addressed this year include pension forfeiture for members who are convicted of a crime, along with additional campaign finance reforms.

**Ridesharing** • A bill I cosponsored would authorize, regulate and provide proper insurance for transportation network companies (such as Uber and Lyft) and the drivers.

**Oil Trains** • My bill with Senator Avella would require oil companies to show sufficient insurance to meet their liability in the event of an oil train accident.

**Smart Parking Meters** • My bill with Senator Amedore would allow parking tickets to be mailed enabling more effective management of parking, and greater convenience for drivers to find and pay for parking using mobile devices.

## Bikes, Books & More

**Bikes.** Bike to Work Day is scheduled for Friday, May 20. Each year, I join fellow bicyclists heading into Downtown Albany. Visit my Facebook page to find out when and where.

**Books.** This summer, I'll be partnering with libraries across the district in their summer reading program.

**Conversations.** In the fall, Community Conversations will take place in a neighborhood near you.

*Stay tuned for details!*

**Job Opportunities.** I've set up a page on my Assembly website as a portal for local, state, and federal employment opportunities.

**Public access television.** Did you know Albany has a public access channel? ChannelAlbany broadcasts from Channel 18 (or 116.3), presenting content made from residents and organizations within the City of Albany. The studio is located in the basement of the Albany Public Library's main branch and is open to the public. For more information, you can e-mail [channelalbany@gmail.com](mailto:channelalbany@gmail.com).



Assemblymember

Patricia A.  
Fahy

Spring 2016

Reports to the People

## Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy

*Chair, Subcommittee on Oversight of the Department of Environmental Conservation*

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