



Assemblymember
PATRICIA A. FAHY

Budget Update – 109th Assembly District



Fall 2018

Dear Neighbors,

It is a pleasure to continue to serve each of you in Albany, Bethlehem, Guilderland and New Scotland in the New York State Assembly. This edition of the legislative and community report includes a preview of the upcoming legislative session along with the results of the community survey sent to constituents in the last newsletter. I'm also pleased to share an update on the many exciting features and happenings in our local libraries.

Patricia A. Fahy
Member of Assembly,
109th District



Legislative Session Preview

The new year promises to be a productive time in the legislature when session begins in January. The Assembly plans to make significant progress on a number of issues, including voting rights, infrastructure spending, climate change, education, the Child Victims Act, marijuana decriminalization, gun safety, the Reproductive Health Act, and more. A couple of Assemblymember Fahy's priorities are highlighted below:

Voting Rights. Making voting more accessible has been a priority of the New York Assembly for years. With new leadership in the State Senate, it now looks more likely than ever that there will be progress on this issue. New York is one of the few states that does not have some form of early voting, which Assemblymember Fahy favors enacting. Assemblymember Fahy also supports legislation to allow online voter registration, consolidating state and federal primaries, and no excuse absentee voting.

Climate Change & Environment. A recent UN report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offered a ray of hope amid much gloom and doom on climate change; we have the tools to fix the climate if legislators treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves. Assemblymember Fahy is committed to supporting legislation that takes a future-focused approach to protect our environment, upgrade our electric grid to increase storage capacity, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and invest in expanding clean energy production power. This session, Assemblymember Fahy plans to support passing the Community and Climate Protection Act, the Forests of the Future Bill, a ban on most single-use plastic products, investments in training a clean energy workforce, upgrading and electrifying transit, and addressing changes in the global recycling market.



The Albany County Rail Trail has become a destination for runners, bikers and hikers of all ages. Assemblymember Fahy joined other numerous elected officials to mark the official completion of the trail's entire nine-mile stretch!

The Capital Region's Library Expedition

Libraries are often the hub of our communities, serving as meeting places, information centers and a helpful reference for any project. As part of the Upper Hudson Library System's "Library Expedition," Assemblymember Fahy toured the truly unique libraries of the 109th district this October and discovered some of the many features our libraries offer beyond the "traditional" services:

Albany Public Library, Bach Branch **455 New Scotland Ave, Albany**

The Albany Library's Bach Branch is located just north of Albany's Helderberg neighborhood. The library is known for its beautiful "secret garden" courtyard, complete with black chestnut trees. The Bach Branch was the first library in the region to be open on Sundays to accommodate the region's Jewish population and has a rich collection of children's books with Jewish themes.

Albany Public Library, Pine Hills Branch **517 Western Ave, Albany**

The Pine Hills Branch of the Albany Library is situated in a busy corridor in Albany across from the police station and the Steamer 10 Theater. They are well known for carrying many Chinese language books, including classics like Ulysses, but also a wide selection of Chinese classics.

Altamont Free Library **179 Main St, Altamont**

The Altamont Free Library is especially distinctive: the building was formerly a train station with the original ticket window still intact! The historic building was restored in 2012 after a seven-year community based initiative and is a veritable community treasure.



The Capital Region is storied for its many heroes that have served in our military. Assemblymember Fahy joined Albany Treasurer Darius Shahinfar to honor our veterans with some young parade watchers at the 2018 Albany Veteran's Day Parade.



Assemblymember Fahy joined Upper Hudson Library Systems' (UHLS) Tim Burke to visit the Voorheesville Public Library as part of the UHLS's "Library Expedition" to encourage readers to become library "36ers." Congratulations to longtime Library Director Gail Sacco (left) on her retirement this year!

Bethlehem Public Library **451 Delaware Ave, Delmar**

Located in the center of Delmar, the Bethlehem Public library has all kinds of interesting gadgets and tools to borrow in addition to books from their "library of things." Visitors can borrow a trail camera to catch a glimpse of the wildlife in their backyard, a virtual reality headset, tools to digitize old family film slides and much, much more.

Guilderland Public Library **2228 Western Avenue, Guilderland**

Visitors to the Guilderland Public Library are greeted by Greufus the Cow, a community landmark that sat on top of Greulich's Market for more than 50 years. The library offers many services to those looking to expand their knowledge, including free access to genealogy software and even an in-house genealogist that visits to help researchers monthly. Visitors can also use the library's free language learning software to study almost any language on Earth!

Voorheesville Public Library **51 School Road, Voorheesville**

The Voorheesville Public Library is a smaller library with a big personality. They offer free museum passes to many attractions in New York, Massachusetts and Vermont, including MiSci and Historic Cherry Hill. One of the most interesting features offered is their seed library, where gardeners can find seeds for all kinds of flowers and produce. Growers are encouraged to return the next year with the seeds from their new blooms!

Survey Results

A survey was included in the last newsletter (summer 2018) to poll residents of the 109th District on their opinions on issues likely to be discussed in the Assembly's upcoming legislative session. The survey received a remarkable 600 plus responses, and while the results are not scientific, they will help inform Assemblywoman Fahy's upcoming legislative priorities.

Standardized Testing Results in Teacher Evaluations.

Currently, New York has a moratorium on the practice of factoring a class's standardized test scores into teacher evaluations. Survey respondents favored continuing a moratorium, with 58% in favor, and 33% opposed. Assemblymember Fahy supports the continuance so that teachers can focus more on student learning and not on constant test prep.

Online Sports Gambling.

Residents of the 109th District were generally not supportive of allowing online sports gambling in New York, with 56% opposed and 36% in favor. This issue became more complicated over the summer when a New York Supreme Court Judge ruled that daily fantasy sports betting platforms also violate current state law, leaving that issue to be dealt with in addition to major league sports betting. Assemblymember Fahy shares serious concerns on the expansion of legal gambling into people's home via the internet.

Medical Aid in Dying.

Six states and Washington D.C. have statutes that allow terminally ill patients to make a decision with their doctors to end their life to avoid suffering. Survey respondents overwhelmingly supported allowing this practice in New York, with 80% in favor and 16% opposed. Assemblymember Fahy recognizes how sensitive this issue is and is generally supportive. She will, however, continue to advocate that the rights of individuals with disabilities be fully protected under any new legislation.



Craft beverages have become a multi-billion dollar boom industry in New York, creating jobs and economic opportunity. Assemblymember Fahy joined Senator George Amedore to tour Remarkable Liquids in the Town of Guilderland, which has created more than 80 jobs in the region.



Five Rivers Environmental Education Center is an important and treasured resource for educating the Capital Region about the natural world around them. Assemblymember Fahy joined staff at Five Rivers in Bethlehem to celebrate an additional 35 acres being added to the center to be conserved forever!

Recreational Marijuana.

The legalization of recreational marijuana in New York has been widely discussed in the news recently. Survey respondents were generally supportive of legalized marijuana, with 64% in favor and 33% opposed. Assemblymember Fahy is a strong supporter of decriminalizing marijuana and expunging the criminal record of those convicted of marijuana possession in an effort to right past wrongs. While Assemblymember Fahy remains open minded on marijuana legalization, especially medical marijuana, a number of serious concerns must be addressed around adolescent abuse of the drug and increased impaired driving which cannot be easily measured.

Online Sales Tax Parity.

Online sales of goods to New York are growing rapidly, increasing convenience but disadvantaging for local brick-and-mortar stores. Asked whether online retailers should be responsible for collecting and remitting the same sales taxes as physical retailers, 75% of respondents agreed that they should, while 22% of respondents disagreed that online retailers should collect sales taxes. The outcome of the recent South Dakota V. Wayfair Inc. Supreme Court case cleared the way for states to level the playing field in taxation of online retailers. Assemblymember Fahy fully supports providing this parity and bringing New York's tax code up to date.

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Survey Results Continued...

Ban on Flavored E-Cigarettes.

E-Cigarettes have become a public health controversy, with many parents concerned about the increase of usage among children, however, many advocates point to the product's utility as a smoking cessation tool. One proposal to balance these interests has been to ban flavored e-cigarettes, which public health groups claim make them appealing to children. A total of 58% of survey respondents favored this idea, while 32% opposed it. Another 10% did not have an opinion, the most of any question. Assemblymember Fahy supports a ban on flavored e-cigarettes, while recognizing concerns raised by those using the devices to quit smoking.

Single-Use Plastic Bag Ban.

Single-use plastic bags are a constant presence in our lives. The damage these bags do to our environment and waterways is a growing problem not just for our ecosystem, but for taxpayers that have to pay to clean up a portion of the 23 billion used in New York State alone each year! Only a tiny fraction of these bags are recycled, so one proposed solution is a ban on plastic bags with a nominal fee of paper bags to encourage consumers to use reusable bags and reduce the amount of waste they produce. Surprisingly, 68% of survey respondents supported this idea, while 27% were opposed. Assemblymember Fahy has been a strong supporter of a ban on single-use plastic bags and related environmental clean-up proposals.



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