



ASSEMBLYMAN
Michael Cusick
Update from Albany



SUMMER 2016

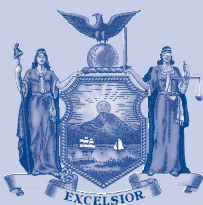
Dear Neighbor:

I hope this finds you well, and that you are enjoying your summer. As your representative in Albany, I work each and every day to advocate for policies and legislation that will positively benefit the people of our borough. During this session, I sought to tackle some of the most pressing issues facing Staten Islanders, including the ongoing heroin & opioid epidemic, inadequate transportation services, and lowering the tax burden on our middle class families.

This newsletter contains information on what I and my colleagues accomplished on your behalf during the Legislative session. I hope that it is both helpful and informative, and should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me. My office is located at 1911 Richmond Avenue, our phone number is (718) 370-1384, and my email address is cusickm@nyassembly.gov. I wish you a safe and relaxing summer, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Cusick
 Member of Assembly
 District 63



**Progress & Accomplishments
 From the 2016 Legislative Session**

Lowering the Tax Burden on Our Middle Class

In this year's budget agreement, we included the largest income tax cut for middle class families in over 70 years. Over the next two years, the rate of 6.85 percent for taxpayers earning between \$40,000 and \$150,000 will be reduced to 6.45 percent, while those earning between \$150,000 and \$300,000 will see their rates drop from 6.85 percent to 6.65 percent. When these cuts are fully implemented in 2018, all taxpayers will pay a rate of 5.5 percent. These new rates will save New Yorkers over \$6 billion in the first four years, and will benefit over 6 million taxpayers.



Assemblyman Cusick debates on the floor of the Assembly.

Attacking the Heroin & Opioid Abuse Crisis

The heroin & opioid abuse crisis has grown to epidemic proportions on Staten Island and across our state. Over the course of the last six months, we have responded forcefully by providing record funding for treatment facilities, passing legislation to limit the length of opioid prescriptions, and prevent insurance companies from barring individuals from the treatment they need to recover from addiction. I proudly passed legislation (A.10478) which promotes the use of abuse-deterrent opioids whenever possible. I also passed legislation (A.10726) which allows more professionals the ability to administer the overdose prevention drug Narcan, mandates that all counties in NYS report overdose data to the Department of Health on a quarterly basis, and mandates that hospitals provide a discharge plan to all individuals admitted for an overdose.

Securing Tax Relief for Our Veterans

Our veterans have done so much for our nation and I believe it is my duty as a legislator to thank them whenever possible. This year, I passed legislation (A.9688) which allows for the New York City Council to exempt New York City's veterans from school taxes, potentially saving the families of our service men and women hundreds of dollars annually. I implore the City Council to take up this proposal as soon as possible as a token of our gratitude to the men and women who have fought to preserve our freedom.

Maintaining the Staten Island Discount on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge

In this year's budget, I fought to ensure the continuance of the long-awaited toll relief on the Verrazano Bridge for Staten Island residents and commercial drivers with New York State E-ZPass tags. The final 2016-2017 budget agreement includes \$10.3 million for this discount. The Staten Island resident rate is \$5.50 per crossing with E-ZPass and the commercial discount will remain intact. Senator Lanza and I negotiated the deal with the Governor's Office and respective leaders in each house ensuring the discount remains for the coming year.



Assemblyman Cusick announces the toll discount plan for the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge.

Sign Up for Goethals, Bayonne, and Outerbridge Crossing Toll Relief

Currently, the cash toll on these crossings is \$15. Senator Lanza and I have crafted a plan which gives E-ZPass holders a reduced toll on their third trip over New Jersey spans in a calendar month. Once the third trip is taken, the

first two trips will be rolled back to \$6.25.

Islanders who want to participate in the three-trip plan should go to panynj.gov, visit the NY E-ZPass Customer Service Center in Travis, or call E-ZPass at (800) 333-8655.

Delivering for Staten Island

- **Equipping Staten Islanders With the Tools to Save a Life:**

In the first six months of this year, over 50 Staten Islanders have died from an opioid overdose. Together with Senator Andrew Lanza, I have organized several Opioid Overdose Prevention Events which include training on how to administer the overdose reversal drug Naloxone or "Narcan". At these events, we aim to educate Islanders on the dangers of these drugs, how to identify someone who may be addicted, how to get them help, and should it be necessary, how to save a life. We have held these seminars across the borough, from Port Richmond to Tottenville and in between. As a result, thousands of Islanders are now equipped with the tools and the knowledge needed as we continue to battle this crisis.

- **Securing funding for West Shore Transportation Study:**

Transportation issues remain at the forefront of my agenda while I am working in Albany. This year, we scored a major victory by getting a commitment from the MTA to conduct a transportation alternatives study for the West Shore corridor. For many years I, along with many of my colleagues in state and local government, as well as organizations like the SIEDC, have pushed tirelessly for the appropriate study to determine the best course of action to improve transit options along the West Shore. By June 30, 2017, we will have our answer. I am committed to continuing to fight for transit improvements throughout the borough, as we should not have to continue to suffer the longest commute times in the entire nation.

- **Widening Slosson Avenue Exit Ramp on the Staten Island Expressway:**

Through a partnership with Governor Cuomo, the State Department of Transportation, and Councilman Steven Matteo, we secured state funding to expedite the construction of the widening of the Slosson Avenue exit off the westbound Staten Island Expressway. The project, now complete, widened the lower half of the ramp from one lane to two, allowing for much smoother traffic flow through the intersection and limiting backup which often times spilled back onto the Expressway. Commuters who use the ramp during rush hour, and parents who drop off and pick up their children at St. Teresa's School and PS 29 are among the 5,600 daily motorists who will see marked improvements in their travel through this chronically plagued intersection.



Assemblyman Cusick addresses a full auditorium at Wagner High School at an Opioid Overdose Prevention Event.



Assemblyman Cusick marches in the Staten Island St. Patrick's Day Parade.



Assemblyman Cusick partnered with students from PS 35 on the "Valentines for Veterans" program.



2016 Legislative Results

During the past legislative session, twenty-nine bills that I authored were passed through the Assembly, making me one of the most active legislators in Albany.

Prohibiting Corrupt Public Officials from Collecting Taxpayer Funded Pensions

We took the common sense step to strip pensions from representatives who have been convicted of corruption. State representatives are sent to Albany to represent their constituents, not their own self-interest. Taxpayers should not continue to fund elected officials who broke the law, and this legislation begins the process of amending the state constitution to codify that fact. (A.7704)

- **Stopping the City Council Bag Tax:** In May, the New York City Council passed legislation which mandates that stores charge 5 cents for every disposable shopping bag they provide to shoppers. In response, I introduced legislation (A.9904) which would ban any municipality in the State of New York from implementing such a tax, thus overturning the City Council legislation. This legislation forced the City Council to delay implementation of the tax until February, allowing for the City and the State to come together to develop a better way to deal with plastic waste. As the representative of the district that once housed the Fresh Kills landfill, I am uniquely familiar with the damage that waste can have on a community, and that is why I am leading the charge against this tax. I believe that we can achieve the goal of limiting waste without punishing the taxpayers of the city of New York, and I will continue to advocate for increased recycling programs and other policies that work toward this goal.

- **Fighting Back Against Organized Retail Crime:** Governor Cuomo signed my legislation into law (A.6503-A) combating organized retail crime in New York State. This legislation is the first time that “organized retail crime,” a \$30 billion annual cost to businesses and a health danger to consumers, will be written in statute in the State of New York. My legislation will also aid law enforcement in prosecuting these crimes, as all charges can now be heard in one county court rather than smaller cases across numerous counties, where many of these perpetrators could avoid prosecution.
- **Providing Tax Credits to Small Businesses that Hire Disabled Persons:** The Assembly passed my legislation (A.5513-C) which provides a tax credit to any small business that hires an individual with a disability in a full time position for at least one year. Disabled persons face unbelievable challenges in their daily lives, with so many earning poverty-level wages. Many of these individuals are fully capable potential employees, and this legislation establishes an incentive for small business owners to provide an opportunity for them to grow as citizens of our State.
- **Establishing a Statewide Physical Fitness Campaign:** In response to the ongoing battle against obesity in New York and around the country, the Assembly passed my legislation (A.9356) which establishes a statewide physical fitness campaign. The campaign would encourage healthy living and active lifestyles through advertising, promotion of outdoor events, and providing information on how to live a healthier life and how to become physically active in your community. For many, the barrier to living a healthy life is a lack of information. This campaign would provide New Yorkers with the knowledge of the dangers of obesity, and the information on where and how to get active in the state of New York.

Assemblyman Cusick Chairs the Assembly Committee on Election Law

As the Chair of the Assembly Election Law Committee, I oversee all legislation that pertains to and affects elections on a local, state, and federal level. This year, the committee passed my legislation that would allow 17 year olds to vote in primary elections if they will be 18 years of age by the time of the General Presidential election (A.504). We also passed legislation to combine the federal and state primary election dates, saving voters a trip to the polls and saving \$25 million in election administration costs (A.9108), and closed the LLC loophole which allowed unlimited campaign contributions (A.6975-C). The committee also passed bills to establish “no-excuse” absentee voting by mail (A.3874-B), establish early voting (A.8582-B), allow for electronic voter registration (A.10370) and establish electronic poll books (A.8608-A) to ensure the most up to date voter registration information so that nobody is improperly turned away from the voting booth on Election Day.



VETS Discount Program

I have partnered with the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce to initiate a discount program for veterans of the United States military who live in Staten Island. To join this program and receive reductions on goods and services at participating businesses, sign up at my office at 1911 Richmond Avenue. Please bring your discharge papers (DD-214) to receive your Staten Island VETS card. You will be given a listing of participating businesses that offer discounts at their establishments. For more information, contact our district office at (718) 370-1384.

Businesses wishing to offer a discount should contact the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce for more details (718-727-1900).



Assemblyman Cusick thanks Staten Island's veterans at a Memorial Day service at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Armory.



Assemblyman Cusick with U.S. Army Major Adam Scher & Cadet Gabow at the Military Academy at West Point.



Assemblyman Cusick meets with a Staten Island Vietnam Veteran.



Assemblyman

**Michael
Cusick**

**UPDATE
FROM ALBANY**

SUMMER 2016

UNCLAIMED MONEY

The New York State Office of the Comptroller may have money that belongs to you! There is over \$14 billion dollars of unclaimed money from bank accounts, stocks, and bonds, utility deposits, income tax refunds, and inheritances to name a few. To see if New York State has money that belongs to you, go to the Comptroller's website (www.osc.state.ny.us) and click on "Unclaimed Funds."