



Assemblyman  
**Michael Cusick**  
**Information Concerning**  
**Benefits Available To You**



Fall 2016

**Dear Neighbor:**

I hope this letter finds you well. Enclosed is a listing of services and benefits available to you as a resident of our borough. I know that many families are working hard to make ends meet, and it is my hope that some of this information may help you keep more of your hard-earned money in your wallet.

As your representative in Albany, it is my foremost obligation to address the issues important to you and your family. Included in this mailer is information on a variety of programs that are geared toward saving you money, including toll discounts, tax exemptions, and college tuition assistance.

Each day my staff and I hear from constituents and help to connect them with the services and programs available to assist with their issues. It is my hope that the information contained in this letter is informative and beneficial to you and your family.

Should you have any questions about this information or any other topic, please feel free to contact my office at 718-370-1384, or by email at [cusickm@nyassembly.gov](mailto:cusickm@nyassembly.gov). I encourage you to follow me on Facebook (Michael Cusick) and on Twitter (@michael\_cusick) to stay updated on what I am working on at home and in Albany. We are always available to help.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Cusick  
 Member of Assembly  
 District 63



Assemblyman Cusick meets with Boy Scouts and students in his District Office.



Meeting with seniors at the Todt Hill Friendship Club.



Assemblyman Cusick recently addressed a class of cadets at the US Military Academy at West Point.

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## TRANSPORTATION



### Toll Discounts: Goethals, Bayonne, and Outerbridge Crossings

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](http://panynj.gov), visit the NY E-ZPass Customer Service Center in Travis, or call E-ZPass at (800) 333-8655.

### Staten Island Discount on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge

In this year's budget, I fought to ensure the continuance of 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.

### MTA MetroCard Discount

For customers who are 65 years of age or older or have a qualifying disability. The base subway or local bus fare is \$2.75. Reduced fare is half the base fare, \$1.35 or less with Reduced-Fare MetroCard discounts. Call 718-330-1234 or 311 or visit <http://web.mta.info/bandt/html/dscintro.html>, or visit any MetroCard Customer Service Center.

### Access-A-Ride (AAR)

Access-A-Ride provides transportation for people with disabilities who are unable to use public bus or subway service for some or all of their trips. It offers shared ride, door-to-door paratransit service. MTA New York City Transit administers AAR; private carriers under contract to NYC Transit provide service. Call NYC Transit at 718-330-1234 or 1(877)337-2017.

## EDUCATION AND TUITION AID

### State Scholarships, Grants and Awards

NYS Higher Education Services Corporation: (888)-697-4372, [www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov).

NYHELPS state loan program offers students (if they have a co-signer), parents, and legal guardians or sponsors a loan equaling the cost of their attendance minus all other federal and state financial aid. Visit [www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov) for more information.

The Aid for Part-Time Study (APTS) program provides grant assistance for eligible part-time students enrolled in approved undergraduate studies. Awards provide up to \$2,000 per year for part-time undergraduate study at participating institutions in New York State. Visit [www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov) for more information.



*Addressing students and faculty of the College of Staten Island.*

### College Tuition Tax Credit

If you, your spouse, or a dependent attended an institution of higher education as an undergraduate and paid qualified tuition expenses you may be eligible for the college tuition tax credit.

Visit [www.tax.ny.gov/pit/credits/college\\_tuition\\_credit.htm](http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/credits/college_tuition_credit.htm) for more information.

### Veterans Tuition Awards

These awards apply to full-time study and part-time study for eligible veterans enrolled in either an undergraduate degree, graduate degree or diploma and certificate programs at degree-granting institutions or noncredit vocational training programs of at least 320 clock hours specifically approved by the New York State Education Department.

The Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant is for undergraduate students who are not eligible for a Pell Grant, but whose parent or guardian was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and died as a result of service performed in Iraq or Afghanistan after September 11, 2001.

Visit [www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov) to learn more, or contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 800-433-3243 or [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov).

## TAXES AND EXEMPTIONS

### STAR School Property Tax Reduction Program

New applicants who qualify for Basic or Enhanced STAR must register with New York State instead of applying with your assessor. You will receive a STAR credit in the form of a check, rather than receiving a property tax exemption (if you qualify for STAR). The dollar value of the credit will be the same as the property tax exemption. Senior citizens age 65 or older who receive Enhanced STAR must continue to file each year as they have in the past. For more information, call 518-457-2036 or visit [www.tax.ny.gov](http://www.tax.ny.gov).

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Participating in a Flag Day Ceremony at P.S. 30 with members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

## Veterans Property Tax Exemption Program

Qualified veterans living in a private house, condominium, or cooperative apartment who served during specific periods of conflict in the armed forces during one of the following: Persian Gulf Conflict (beginning Aug. 2, 1990), Vietnam War (Feb. 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975), Korean War (June 27, 1950 to Jan. 31, 1955), World War II (Dec. 7, 1941 to Dec. 31, 1946) are eligible for a property tax exemption. Other owners who are eligible: wife or husband of a qualified veteran, surviving spouse of a qualified veteran (who has not remarried), and Gold Star parents. Additionally, I have authored legislation (A.9688) which, if enacted by the New York City Council, will provide veterans with an exemption on the school tax portion of their property tax bill. Call 518-457-2036 or visit <http://www.tax.ny.gov> for more information.

## Staten Island Veterans Discount Program

Assemblyman Cusick 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 Assemblyman Cusick's office (1911 Richmond Ave., 718-370-1384). Bring your discharge papers (DD-214) to receive the Staten Island VETS card.

## Income Tax Exemption for Active Military Personnel in Combat Zones

All active military personnel serving in a combat zone are exempt from city, state, and federal income taxes for the income earned during this period. For more information, visit: [www.tax.ny.gov](http://www.tax.ny.gov).

## Tax Preparation

New York City offers a free tax preparation program for those who earned \$30,000 or those with children who earned \$54,000 or less last year. Find out if you are able to claim tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the NYC Child Care Tax Credit.



## HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

HEAP helps pay heating costs. Eligibility is determined by annual income and household size. Call 718-557-1399 or the NYS HEAP Hotline at 800-342-3009

or the New York State Office for the Aging Senior Citizens Helpline at 800-342-9871 or visit [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov).

## RENT RELIEF

The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption program (SCRIE) and the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program give assistance to eligible residents age 62 and older and the disabled. Call NYC Department of Finance at 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov/finance](http://www.nyc.gov/finance).

## HELP AT HOME

Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP) helps residents age 60 and older who want to live at home but need help with activities, such as dressing, bathing, shopping and cooking. Call the NYC Department for the Aging at 212-442-1000 or visit [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).



Together with Senator Lanza hosting an Overdose Prevention & Reversal Training Event at Port Richmond HS.

## PRESCRIPTION DRUGS & RESPONDING TO THE HEROIN & OPIOID ABUSE CRISIS

**Overdose Prevention & Narcan Training Seminars:** Together with Senator Andrew Lanza, I have organized several Opioid Overdose Prevention Events which include training on how to administer the overdose reversal drug Naxalone or "Narcan." In the first six months of this year, over 50 Staten Islanders have died from an opioid overdose. 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 hold these events on an ongoing basis, and I encourage you to call my office for a schedule of our upcoming seminars."

**EPIC:** Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage cuts prescription drug costs for residents age 65 and older. Call the EPIC Helpline at 1-800-332-3742 or visit [www.health.ny.gov/health\\_care/epic/](http://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/epic/).

## NON-EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE DIAL 311

Find a Police Precinct	Sidewalk Repair
Illegal Parking	Landlord Maintenance
Find a Towed Vehicle	Heat/Hot Water
Vehicle Blocking Driveway	Water/Sewage
Pay a Parking Ticket	Stray or Sick Animals
Street Lights/Traffic Signals	Noise from Neighbor
Potholes/Street Repairs	



*Assemblyman  
Michael Cusick*

*Information &  
Benefits  
Available to You*

*Fall 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 and click on Unclaimed Funds. All you have to do is enter your name and your city. Visit [www.osc.state.ny.us](http://www.osc.state.ny.us).

**Smoke Detectors save lives!  
Remember to test your battery**