



## COMMUNITY NEWS

from Assemblyman

# J. Gary PRETLOW

Summer 2012

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Greetings,

*The passage of this year's 2012-13 on-time state budget signals a new day in Albany, as we passed an on-time, bipartisan, fiscally responsible state budget that delivers for hardworking families in the 87<sup>th</sup> District.*

*The budget closes the state's \$3.5 billion budget deficit without any new taxes, fees or gimmicks, while increasing funding to our schools and vital health care and jobs programs. This budget also invests in key job-creating programs and increases aid to our schools and health care system, while holding spending under 2 percent growth. In addition, as I am sure many of you are aware, New York will once again exempt the state's 4 percent sales tax on clothing, footwear and related items sold for less than \$110, which began on April 1<sup>st</sup>. These crucial measures will strengthen our state's economic recovery, provide our children with a quality education and keep money in the pockets of working families. In addition, the budget continues new tax brackets first established last December, creating the lowest middle-class tax rate in 58 years, which cut taxes for 99 percent of New Yorkers.*

*This year's budget increases school aid for the City of Mount Vernon, NY by 5.10 percent for a total of \$70,291,208 and provides a 5.26 percent increase for the City of Yonkers for a total of \$168,832,031. The key to a successful future for our children starts in the classroom. That's why I fought and will continue to fight to increase school aid, making sure our children have access to the quality education they deserve.*

## WORKING FAMILIES AND JOB CREATION

Over the past few decades, the gap between the wealthy and poor in our country has increased dramatically. In an effort to bring fairness to working families, I helped pass legislation in the Assembly that would raise the minimum wage to \$8.50 per hour in 2013 and link it to the rate of inflation starting January 2014.

With the majority of our state's wealth and prosperity concentrated in the hands of very few, more and more New Yorkers have joined the ranks of the working poor. This has left many families working harder for less. These staggeringly low wages threaten the well-being of many families who struggle to afford even the most basic necessities. By putting more money in the pockets of low-wage workers, we will not only help families afford the cost of food, clothing and rent, we will strengthen our economic recovery as well. Providing families with a little extra money will help get them back into our local stores purchasing products and services again.

Our final budget also includes robust funding for economic development initiatives across New York



State. The 2012-13 final budget provides \$794.6 million to various Empire State Development Corporation projects to help promote business growth, leading to job creation and revitalized communities throughout the state.

## PROTECTING OUR SENIORS

While the economy is starting to rebound, many New Yorkers are still struggling, particularly the most vulnerable among us. Seniors especially need our help in these economic times. I am pleased to have helped pass a restoration of co-payment assistance for enrollees of the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage Program (EPIC) in the 2012-2013 budget.

EPIC helps low- and moderate-income seniors pay for medication costs that are not covered by Medicare. The budget provides \$30.6 million to support the restoration of co-payment assistance that was eliminated on January 1, 2012. This allows EPIC enrollees to pay no more than \$20 a co-pay when filling a prescription and seniors will see a savings in the new year when they once again pay between \$3 and \$20 for each prescription.



If you are a senior or know anyone who can benefit from the EPIC Program, you can request an application by calling the NYS Department of Health at 1-800-332-3742 or give my office a call and we will forward an application to you.

## INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH



Our youth, no matter what age, must be looked at as our society's future workers, entrepreneurs and leaders. Despite negative circumstances surrounding some of our youth and young adults, we must never stop creating opportunities that will provide many of them with the skills that will allow them to transition to a healthy work environment and thus becoming productive citizens in their respective communities.

On December 9, 2011, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed the New York Youth Works Program into law. This program was established to hire unemployed, disadvantaged youth and will support job training and employment for eligible youth 16

to 24. Youth living in the cities of Mount Vernon and Yonkers can take part in the program if eligible.

This program was created to train and assist our youth in getting a job. You can also earn up to \$900 to cover expenses if you get training from an authorized NY Youth Works provider. If you are a business owner, your business can earn tax credits of up to \$4,000 for eligible youth starting work between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2012.

If you need more information, you can contact the New York State Department of Labor by calling 1-877-226-5724 or via email at [info@youthworks.ny.gov](mailto:info@youthworks.ny.gov).

## SUMMER READING CHALLENGE



Summer's here, school is out and it's that time once again for the state Assembly's annual Summer Reading Challenge. The program keeps the imaginations of children engaged and helps to better prepare them to return to school in the fall. The Summer Reading Challenge also exemplifies the Assembly's commitment to providing every child in our state with a quality education. By encouraging our children to continue reading and exploring our cities' libraries over the summer, we can better prepare them for the school year and foster a lifelong enthusiasm for books.

If you would like your child to participate, please give our office a call and we will mail a calendar out to you. The children then must read by themselves or with a partner for a minimum of 15 minutes every day for at least 30 days through the months of July and August. They will then mark off days during which they read on the calendar provided and submit to my office. Once received, those who participated will be awarded a New York State Assembly Excellence in Reading Certificate in the mail.

For more information about the 2012 Summer Reading Challenge, log on to [www.summerreading-nys.org](http://www.summerreading-nys.org) or call my office at (914) 667-0127.

## CYBERBULLYING



In New York State, nearly 16 percent of all students and nearly 21 percent of girls are subject to cyberbullying through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networking websites, texting or other electronic means every year. As many as 28 percent of all students in the United States experience some form of bullying.

I am pleased to announce that the Assembly passed a bill that cracks down on bullying in public schools. Expanding on the Dignity for All Students Act, the legislation will establish a mandatory reporting system for all incidents of bullying and new

training for certain school staff. The bill has the support of the Senate and the Governor.

In today's age of 24-hour connectivity and social networking, there is no escape for students who are subjected to cyberbullying. Bullying that begins in school can follow them home and contribute to low self-esteem, academic problems, delinquent behavior and tragically, violence and suicide. These new guidelines for combating cyberbullying will ensure a safe and secure learning environment for all our students both in and out of school.



**CLIP AND RETURN**



*As your representative, I can assure you that I am and will continue to work on your behalf in the New York State Assembly. Always remember that you have the power to speak up and inform me of any concerns or comments that you have and would like to discuss with me. Please indicate and return to:*

**Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow, 87<sup>TH</sup> District**

6 Gramatan Avenue, Suite 407, Mt. Vernon, New York 10550

or

48 North Broadway, Yonkers, New York 10701

Lined area for writing a message to the representative.

**Name:**

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**Address:**

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