



COMMUNITY NEWS

from Assemblyman

J. GARY PRETLOW

89th Assembly District

Summer 2015

ATTAINING MORE FOR OUR CHILDREN

When it comes to our schools, students have to be our top priority, and we must do everything we can to ensure they are getting the quality education they rightfully deserve. Every student deserves an excellent education and I, along with my colleagues, worked hard to pass a budget that provides funding that will help schools improve their classrooms, meet the needs of students and preserve vital educational programs.

We've also heard parents and teachers loud and clear – it's time to get the focus back on learning rather than testing. That's why we're making changes to our education system that will help our kids get the most out of their time in the classroom. The legislation passed by the Assembly will help teachers better prepare students for certain standardized exams. The State Education Department will now be able to release significantly more past test questions and answers. Also, teachers, principals and superintendents will no longer be required to enter into confidentiality agreements preventing them from discussing the contents of these exams after the exams have been publicly released.

The 2015-2016 budget continued its commitment to invest in our kids' education. I have always fought

for education aid increases and this year is no different. I am excited to share that the City of Mount Vernon will receive a total of \$89,812,303 in state aid, an increase of 12.90% from last year.

I am also in strong support for the Board of Regents' directive to the State Education Department to push back the deadline for school districts to fully implement new teacher evaluations to September 2016 instead of November of this year, ensuring that schools won't have to worry about having their state funding put in jeopardy this year. This change is necessary to ensure that local schools have the funding they need to continue to provide a quality education

No investment is more important than the one we make in our kids. The strength of our community, the well-being of our families and the future of our state depend on the education we provide for our children. I am always listening to those who are on the front lines – our parents and teachers, in an effort to make improvements and do what's best for all students and I will continue to fight to provide our students, parents and educators with the funding and resources needed to ensure that they remain our top priority.

Spotlight on Reading

It is so important that children continue reading during the summer, whether they're in elementary, middle or high school. I urge you to allow your child to participate in the Summer Reading Challenge sponsored by New York State Libraries. Studies show that reading keeps students engaged and continues the progress made during the school year, and the Summer Reading Challenge is a fun, productive way to help foster a love of learning over the summer months.

This year's theme is "Every hero has a story." This is a fantastic way to encourage kids to pick up a book and strengthen their learning skills for the coming year. If your child participates, please notify my office at the end of the summer and I will award your child with a New York State Excellence in Reading Certificate.

For further information you can contact my office, visit summerreadingnys.org or visit the Mount Vernon Public Library. Thank you and happy reading!

"When it comes to our schools, students have to be our top priority, and we must do everything we can to ensure they are getting the quality education they rightfully deserve."



SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

I am pleased to announce that among the many programs in the City of Mount Vernon that I have secured funding for, the most notable are:

- \$1 million for Mount Vernon Memorial Field; and
- \$1 million for the renovation of the Mount Vernon High School pool.

Once the pool is fully functional it will be available for use by the community.

The renovations of both projects are certainly worthwhile and a big step towards improving the quality of life for people who live, work and play in the community. Both have been out of service for many years, and I am happy to assist in allowing them to once again become important gathering places for students, athletes and local residents.



“When it comes to our schools, students have to be our top priority, and we must do everything we can to ensure they are getting the quality education they rightfully deserve.”

FAMILIES FIRST AGENDA – FOCUS ON CHILD CARE

The New York State Assembly passed a series of measures that would continue to address the growing costs of child care and the need for parents to have affordable, reliable, safe places to send their children. I understand that the rising cost of child care throughout our area is outpacing parents’ ability to keep up and so with these measures we’re helping families gain access to quality childcare.

Legislation passed by the Assembly includes measures that would:

- Require the use of simplified applications for parents applying for child care assistance;
- Allow child care providers to post their completed training and credentials on the state office of child and family services website; and
- Require the online listing of all afterschool and child care programs registered by ocfs, along with a map displaying their locations.

Following the recommendations of the Assembly’s Child Care Workgroup, the 2015-16 state budget responded to the rapidly growing costs of child care by including \$34 million to improve New York’s child care system. This investment will help ensure more hardworking families can access the quality child care services they deserve without breaking the bank.

“...the rising cost of child care throughout our area is outpacing parents’ ability to keep up...”

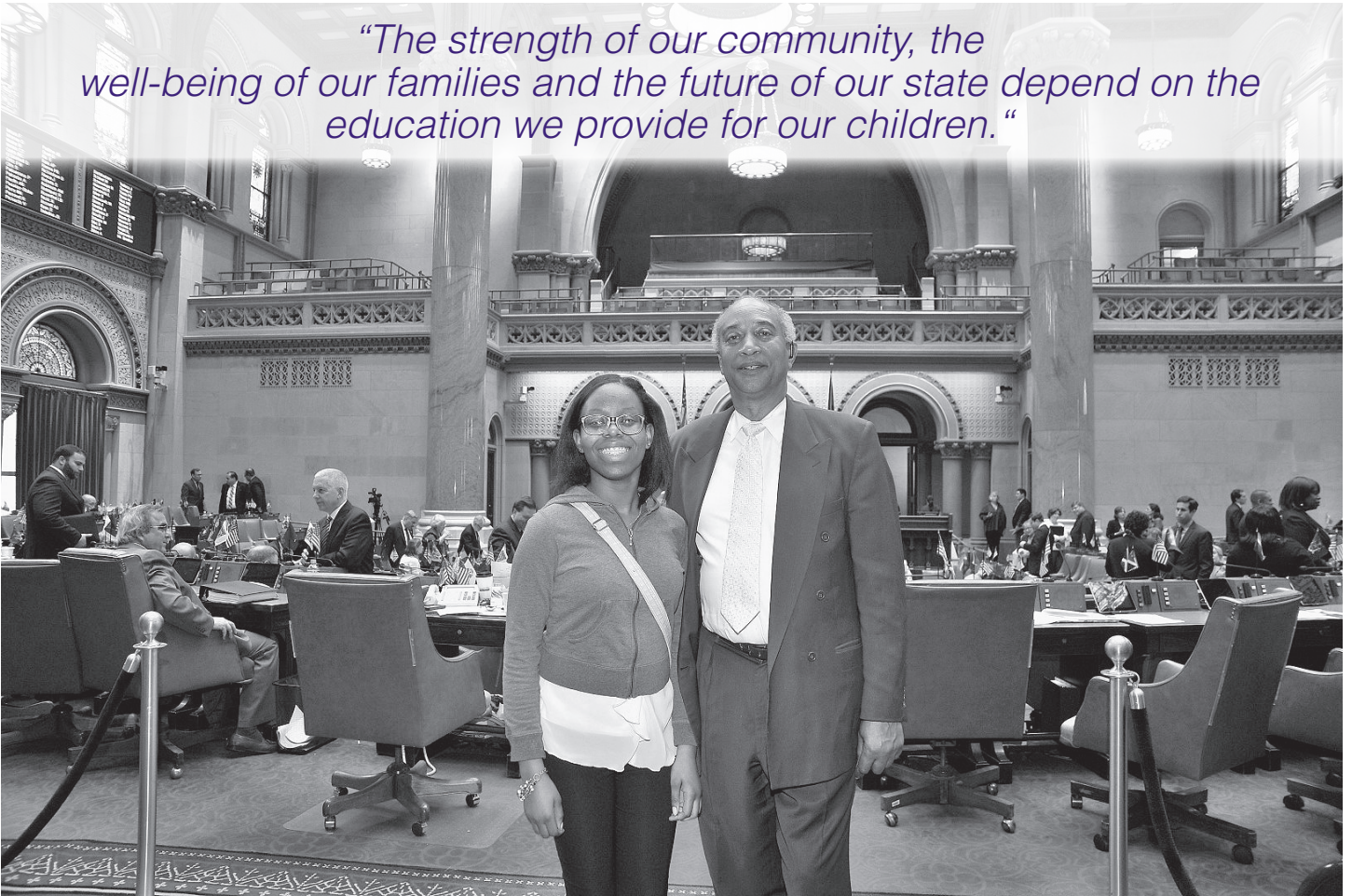
CONSUMER ASSISTANCE

The New York State Attorney General’s Office holds a wealth of information to assist New Yorkers. Whether you are in need of information concerning identity theft, tenants’ rights, lemon law protection, victims’ rights or filing a consumer type complaint,

the Attorney General’s Office is there to assist you.

For further information or to receive brochure on any of the above issues, feel free to contact my office or the New York State Attorney General’s Office directly at 1-800-771-7755 or ag.ny.gov.

“The strength of our community, the well-being of our families and the future of our state depend on the education we provide for our children.”



REFORMING NEW YORK'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Among the most important foundations of safe and successful communities are public confidence in the investigatory and prosecution processes, effective communications and trust between residents and law enforcement. Recent events have raised concerns and shaken the confidence of both communities and law enforcement and as a result, the New York State Assembly realized that there is a need to consider reforms to the criminal justice system.

The Governor of New York State has recently issued an executive order to appoint the Attorney General of New York State, Eric Schneiderman, as a special prosecutor in cases where an unarmed person

dies at the hands of a law enforcement officer, which is seen as a vital first step in rebuilding trust in the criminal justice system.

It is clear that we need a comprehensive, thorough review of the entire process and needed reforms must be enacted into law during the next legislative session. Until then, we must remove any possible conflict of interest and make sure there is an independent review of these horrible, tragic incidents. Part of rebuilding trust in the criminal justice system is ensuring that any family that has to deal with a loved one being killed by law enforcement is confident that the case will be fairly investigated.

HEALTH CARE

Quality, affordable health care is a right that should be guaranteed to each and every New Yorker. No one should be left to fend for themselves when they fall ill or need lifesaving treatment. The 2015-16 budget helps to ensure people get the high-quality care they deserve when they need it most.

Thanks to the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA), 2 million more New Yorkers now have health insurance through the state's health care exchange. To ensure more New Yorkers can afford health care, the final budget implements the Basic Health Program, available under the ACA, which will provide insurance to people whose incomes are between 133 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level and are therefore not eligible for Medicaid. This program would expand affordable health insurance to approximately 438,000 New Yorkers.

Please contact my office for further information or you can visit the NYS Department of Health at info.nystateofhealth.ny.gov/invitation.

The Assembly also passed legislation to include pregnancy as criteria to allow for special enrollment in a health insurance plan. The bill, part of the Assembly's Families First agenda to ensure every family has access to the health care they deserve, would give expectant mothers who are uninsured the opportunity to enroll in a health insurance plan at any time, regardless of whether it falls outside of a designated enrollment plan. This seeks to promote the health and well-being of pregnant women and their newborns. Healthy families mean healthier communities and a brighter future for New York State. By allowing expectant mothers to access health insurance at any time, we can help relieve undue stress and encourage proper prenatal care.

CLIP AND RETURN

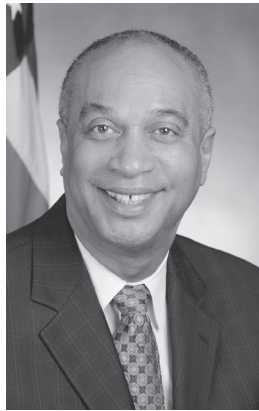


Your questions or comments are important to me. If you have any concerns or issues you would like to discuss with me, please indicate and return to:

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow, 89th District
6 Gramatan Avenue, Suite 201, Mt. Vernon, New York 10550

Name:

Address:



**COMMUNITY
NEWS**

from Assemblyman

**J. Gary
PRETLOW**

SUMMER 2015

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow



DISTRICT OFFICE: 6 Gramatan Avenue, Suite 201 • Mt. Vernon, New York 10550 • 914-667-0127
ALBANY OFFICE: Room 845 Legislative Office Building • Albany, New York 12248 • 518-455-5291
Email: pretlowj@assembly.state.ny.us