



News from Assemblywoman

JUNE 2016

# Sandy Galef

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Dear Constituent,

During a time when calls for a social or economic revolution dominate the national news, I am pleased to report that on April 1 closer to home, we were able to take giant steps to reduce income and gender inequality and ensure fairness for millions of working New Yorkers.

We voted for a 2016-2017 state budget which included groundbreaking measures to raise the statewide minimum wage to \$15 an hour and provide 12 weeks of paid family leave to most employees. I held a pro and con panel discussion with state leaders on both sides of the paid family leave debate in Croton-on-Hudson the week before the final deal was inked. The gradual increase in minimum wage, the first of its kind in the nation, will go a long way to help low-income families lift themselves out of poverty and into the middle class.

In passing the landmark law which will provide workers – regardless of age, gender, employer size – to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave to care for a new child or a sick loved one, New York has created the strongest and most comprehensive program of mandated leave in the country. Again, by passing these two major progressive reforms, we have once again cemented New York's place as a true champion and leader for working families.

As a way to highlight our commitment to helping every child achieve their full potential, we increased education aid by \$1.47 billion – or 6.3 percent – for a total of \$24.7 billion, representing the largest investment in education in New York history. We also made a \$627 million increase in Foundation Aid in order to ensure that all children have access to quality education, and \$433 million to fully eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment once and for all; putting an end to the hardship it's caused our schools and the burden it has been to you as a taxpayer.

Locally, I have continued in my fight opposing the siting of Spectra's high pressure gas pipeline on and near Indian Point Power Plant's property by hosting a press conference and rallying dozens of Senate and Assembly members to sign a letter urging the federal government to halt construction immediately.

I also enjoyed meeting with everyone who came to my District Office Open House on March 18. I appreciate that you took time out of your busy schedules to bring your concerns and issues that need legislative resolution to my attention.

I look forward to seeing you out at local events around my district. Please feel free to stop by my office or give me a call to share your opinion with me.

Sincerely,

Sandy Galef

## Assembly Ethics Bills

I believe that holding public office means maintaining the public's trust. Since being elected to the New York State Assembly, I have been a staunch champion of good government and ensuring that we, as legislators, live up to our oaths and responsibilities of office. In my last newsletter, I outlined my package of 15 bills aimed at reforming the problematic dynamics of POWER, ETHICS, and TRANSPARENCY in state government. While I continue to fight hard to pass these measures, I am also pleased to report that my colleagues and I in the Assembly continued our commitment to renew the public's confidence by passing legislation that would:

- Limit outside income and prohibit a legislator from leveraging his or her public office for financial gain. Under this measure, a lawmaker's outside income would be capped at 40 percent of the annual salary for a New York State Supreme Court Justice;
- Ban a legislator from receiving payment for the use of his or her name in promotional materials, such as letterhead or websites, unless the legislator actually performs work for the company or firm;
- Close the loophole that allows wealthy donors to contribute almost unlimited amounts of money to political campaigns through a limited liability corporation (LLC). This measure forces transparency behind the LLC contributions and drastically lowers them to the same \$5000 limit applied to corporations;
- Prevent so-called "dark money" from flooding into campaigns and being used for unintended purposes by restricting contributions made to political party "housekeeping accounts;" and
- Increase transparency by giving the public more information about lobbyists' and clients of lobbyists' source of funding.



Discussing Ethics bills in the Assembly Chamber with Assemblyman Dinowitz.

# 2016 Budget Highlights

## Highlights in State Education

I am very pleased that we secured \$1.4 billion to increase education aid in this year's state budget. As a former teacher, I believe that putting our children on the path to success starts in our schools. The 2016-2017 state budget—totaling \$24.7 billion—marks not only an investment in education, but it is also an investment in our communities, economy and future.

Included in the 2016-2017 state budget:

- \$434 million to fully repeal the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)
- \$627 million increase in Foundation Aid to ensure schools and teachers have the resources they need to provide all students with a quality education
- \$807 million for pre-K program to continue to foster early childhood development
- \$175 million to convert schools into community schools that will benefit at-risk youth and their families
- \$20 million to implement My Brother's Keeper, a federal initiative to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color
- \$18 million more in operating aid for SUNY schools to preserve the quality of education and protect vital programs and ensures that tuition at SUNY schools will not increase in the coming academic year
- \$13.3 million more in community college base aid funding
- \$23.8 million for opportunity programs, giving even more students a chance at success



*The Ossining Girls Varsity Basketball team came up to Albany to celebrate their recent success in winning the New York State Federation Title this past year.*

## Cutting Taxes for Middle-Class Families

Another striking achievement in this year's state budget is the additional assistance we voted for to provide additional assistance to working and middle-income families. The budget will cut personal income taxes by \$270 million in 2018 and will gradually decrease over the next eight years. When fully phased in, these tax savings will increase to approximately \$3 billion by 2025, making the state's tax rate the lowest in 70 years and benefit up to 6 million New Yorkers.

These cuts would incrementally reduce the middle-class tax rates for single filers earning between \$13,000 and \$200,000, heads of households earning between \$19,500 and \$250,000, and married couples earning between \$26,000 and \$300,000.

## Giving New Yorkers a Raise

I believe that every New Yorker who puts in an honest day's work deserves a livable wage. The legislature voted to gradually increase the state minimum wage to help lift working families out of poverty and give them a pathway to the middle class. Governor Cuomo signed this groundbreaking measure – the first in the country – into law on April 4th.

The minimum wage increase reflects the disparate costs of living and economic realities in various regions of the state. For employees who work in Westchester and Long Island, the minimum wage will increase from \$9 to \$10 by the end of 2016, and will then increase \$1 each year until it is capped at \$15 by the end of 2021. Workers in New York City will see their pay increase to \$11 at the end of 2016 with \$2 increases until it reaches \$15 by the end of 2018.

For the workers in the rest of the state, the minimum wage will increase to \$9.70 cents at the end of 2016, then will increase at 70 cent increments at the end of each year until it reaches \$12.50 at the end of 2020. After 2020, the minimum wage will increase to \$15 in growths determined by an indexed schedule set by the Division of Budget and Department of Labor. Workers who depend on tips will see their wages pegged at two-thirds of the minimum wage rounded either to the nearest five cents or to \$7.50, whichever is higher.

However, the law also contains a "safety valve" provision which provides the Division of Budget, beginning in 2019,

with a way to gauge the economic impact of the wage increase and determine whether a temporary suspension is warranted.

## It's Official: New York Puts Families First

We all know how hard it is these days to make ends meet. All too often, millions of New Yorkers are faced with that untenable challenge of having to choose between a paycheck and taking care of a new child or a sick family member. Balancing the needs of our hard-working constituents and those of the small business sector who are the backbone of our state economy was a top priority for us in the legislature.

To prove this point, we passed in the state budget a landmark paid family leave law – the strongest and most comprehensive in the nation. When fully phased in, this new law will afford employees 12 weeks of paid leave per year to care for a new child or a family member in need. This law applies to all workers regardless of business size who have worked at their jobs for six months and will be funded through small weekly employee payroll contributions. The policy will be implemented gradually with benefits starting in 2018:

- 2018 – 8 weeks of paid leave at 50% of the employee's average weekly wage;
- 2019 – 10 weeks of paid leave at 60% of the employee's average weekly wage;
- 2021 – 12 weeks of paid leave at 67% of the employee's average weekly wage.



*Local residents came to Albany to support bills that would encourage organ donations.*

# January Questionnaire Results

I want to take a moment to thank those of you who participated in the survey that I sent out in my winter newsletter. The responses were certainly interesting, and I am grateful for the input from my constituents as the legislature delves into the post-budget law decisions. The results of the survey are as follows:

Question	In Favor	Opposed
1. Do you support or oppose physician assisted suicide for terminally ill adults?	73.4%	26.2%
2. Should we require police to strip firearms from anyone convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence incident?	82.4%	17.6%
3. NYS has recently legalized medical marijuana for patients with serious medical needs. Should we expand this further to allow for legalization of all marijuana in NYS as has been done in Colorado?	41.6%	58.4%
4. Do you support those who receive a driver's license to be automatically registered to vote unless they decline the registration on the form?	56.9%	43.1%
5. Should we ban e-cigarette usage in any indoor place where smoking is banned?	84.7%	15.3%
6. Should NY adopt paid family leave for several months to care for a new child or seriously ill family member?	72.9%	27.1%
7. Should we have full-time state legislators with an increase in pay as well as a ban on any outside income?	64.5%	35.4%
8. Should we adopt a single-payer health care system in NY modeled after Medicare?	66.8%	33.2%
9. Do you support a red light camera program in our communities to identify and fine automobile speeders?	51.8%	48.2%
10. Do you believe that the NYS Property Tax Cap is working well?	64%	36%

## AIM Project Update

Earlier this spring, Governor Cuomo joined me, along with scores of federal, state, and local officials and citizens, calling for a halt to the construction of the Algonquin Incremental Market (AIM) Project, in Cortlandt and Peekskill, pending results from an independent safety risk analysis.

In a letter addressed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Governor orders the agency to stop any further action on the AIM Project and directs the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Department of Health, and the New York State Department of Public Service to begin work on an assessment of the environmental, health and safety risks posed by siting the pipeline in such close proximity to the nuclear power plant, Indian Point Energy Center.



## Attention High School and College Students: Call for Interns

If you are, or know of, a high school or college student who has an interest in the inner workings of government, please contact my district office in downtown Ossining. Volunteer interns in my office gain a unique educational experience by participating in the everyday activities of their state and local government, and will learn skills that will benefit them in the job market and in school.

For more information about the internship program or to apply, please visit <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Sandy-Galef/story/46712> or call my office at 914-941-1111

## Did You Know?

Here are some innovations that you may not be aware of that will streamline how you look at travel and transportation now and into the future:

### ★ The REAL ID Cards

You may have heard of a REAL ID card but not have known exactly what it is. The REAL ID Act was passed by Congress after 9/11 to establish specific requirements for state-issued driver licenses and identity cards in an effort to prevent terrorists from evading detection by using fake identification. The law required all states to start issuing licenses and identity cards with these federal requirements and prohibits the use of non-compliant cards to gain access to government buildings and airports.

Until notified of a change in status, New Yorkers are still able to use their current state-issued driver license or identity card thanks to a waiver from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). However, the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offers the option of choosing an Enhanced Driver License (EDL) which fully meets the REAL ID requirements and can be used for broader purposes, including entry to the U.S. from Canada and Mexico without a passport. But it will cost you an extra \$30 to choose an EDL over a standard non-compliant card which is \$30. For more information about EDLs visit the NY DMV website at: <https://dmv.ny.gov/driver-license/get-enhanced-driver-license-edl>.

### ★ Passport Cards

The U.S. Passport Card is a credit card-sized identification document. Like the traditional passport book, it features the traditional passport photo and gives Customs officers access to your personal information. But unlike the book,

this information is only accessible through a radio frequency identification chip that links the card to all the government databases that contain your personal details. Whereas a passport book can be used for international air travel, the passport card can only be used to enter the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda at land border crossings or sea ports-of-entry. But with its smaller global reach, comes its smaller price and greater convenience than the passport book. For \$55, first-time applicants can simply stick their passports in their wallets. For more information on where and how you can attain a passport card, please visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/information/card.html>.



*In April, Sandy attended a Sing Sing Correctional Facility's Fallen Officers' Memorial to commemorate the efforts of State Prison Officers and Emergency Services personnel.*



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## 2016 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

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## Ossining and Peekskill Welcomes Two New Strolling Experiences



*The Hudson River Greenway projects are expanding in our area. The Sing Sing Kill Greenway in Ossining and Peekskill's South Waterfront Park and Trailway are a great place for a stroll this summer and fall.*