



# Legislative Update

from Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee



2013 Year End Report

Dear Neighbors,

It's hard to believe we're already heading into the new year. This has been a busy fall, with the Public Service Commission hearings on our water supply, discussions about mass transit options for the Tappan Zee Bridge, new directions in public education—just to name a few key developments affecting all of us in the 97th Assembly District.

### Concerns about education policy

In particular, I have received scores of calls and emails from those of you who are concerned about the direction of our public schools with the Common Core Curriculum. Please see my comments to the right, which include my strong objections to the State Education Department having access to our students' personal information along with my fears that we are over-testing our students.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read this Year End Report. As I head back to legislative session, I welcome your suggestions and comments, so I can convey your concerns to state leaders. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2014.

Ellen C. Jaffee  
NYS Assemblymember, 97th District



Assemblywoman Jaffee with Rockland County Civil Rights Hall of Fame members Drs. Susan and Edmund Gordon at the Rockland Historical Society Gala. The Gordons were awarded the Living Landmark Award for their commitment to making a difference in our community.



Assemblywoman Jaffee at Veterans Day 2013 memorial ceremony in Suffern.

## Ellen Jaffee speaks out about the Common Core curriculum

### What is the Common Core?

The Common Core is a program to create national standards for the curriculum for English and math. It sets benchmarks that provide consistent goals for what students should learn and be able to do, in order to ensure that every student across New York State is on track for college and career readiness.

### What are the problems with Common Core, and how do we fix them?

The rush to implement this program concerns many educators. As a former teacher, a parent, grandmother and legislator, I believe the goals of the Common Core curriculum are worthy, but our state must adapt to it slowly, so that the program can be successful. Pushing Common Core too fast is already creating tension and failure. I agree with the overwhelming number of educators, professionals, and parents who agree the transition to Common Core needs more time. Reaching the following goals will ensure the success of the Common Core:

1. Build a better understanding of the Common Core's benefits and steps needed to make the program work;
2. Invest in professional development to support our teachers as they adapt to changes the Common Core will require;
3. Review our state's use of standardized testing as follows:
  - a) How many tests should students be required to take
  - b) What grade levels should be tested
  - c) How much time should be spent preparing for and taking tests.
4. Provide enough funding for our school districts to have the proper resources to help our students meet the new requirements;
5. Revise and review the Common Core to ensure we achieve new standards and advance student learning

### Sharing Student Data

The New York State Education Department (SED) has a plan to share sensitive student data with a database project called inBloom, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. While some say this will cut costs in implementing Common Core, many parents and educators nationwide fear that this information about our students' test scores, disciplinary records, attendance, and learning disabilities will be shared with businesses. At present New York is one of only three states to have signed on to inBloom. Assemblywoman Jaffee does not believe a student's personal information should be made available to sources outside of the school district and is concerned because inBloom will not guarantee that student data will be protected.

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# Assemblywoman Jaffee's bills become law, improving



*East Ramapo Save Our Schools in Albany with Assemblywoman Jaffee and Assemblywoman Nolan, chair of the Education Committee.*

## Jaffee's Lottery "Spin-Up" bill will help East Ramapo school district

Governor Cuomo signed the East Ramapo Lottery "Spin-Up" bill (A.7514) into law, legislation that Assemblywoman Jaffee co-authored. The law will help the East Ramapo Central School District students by providing an advance of \$3.5 million, interest-free from the New York State Lottery funds the district already receives. The bill would restore some of the devastating cuts and help the students by:

- **Providing funds to help the district work toward financial stability;**
- **Restoring some programs for students, including extracurricular activities;**
- **Paying for some teachers and security staff who were impacted by the cuts;**
- **Providing oversight for all expenses that the lottery money will cover.**

Jaffee hopes this will help the district to provide high-quality educational opportunities that the students deserve and are guaranteed under our state Constitution.

## Plan to fix county budget saves taxpayer money

The Rockland County Deficit Financing Act (A.695) allows the county to borrow up to \$96 million, taken in the form of bonds, to settle debts from the years 2010-2012. This plan saves taxpayer dollars by keeping interest rates down. The county will pay back the money over a ten-year period, with oversight and approval required by the state comptroller's office.

## Jaffee law designates new waterfront parklands for Orangetown

The Parkland Alienation Law (A.8067) authorizes the Town of Orangetown to create a new waterfront park along Lake Tappan. Once developed, the new park will be open for bicycle riding, walking, rollerblading and picnicking, while expanding public access to the lake.

## Jaffee law makes life-threatening over-the-counter cold medicines illegal for teens

There is an alarming trend of teens using over-the-counter cough medicines to get high. While cough and cold medicines are safe for most people, growing numbers of teens are abusing products that contain dextromethorphan (DXM), a non-narcotic cough suppressant used in more than 100 cough and cold medicines. These include Robitussin, Sudafed, Tylenol, Nyquil, as well as generic products. Taken in large quantities, DXM can cause hallucinations, brain damage, seizures and even death. The new law prohibits stores from selling any products containing DXM to persons under the age of 18 without a prescription and requires proof of legal age to purchase these products. Any retail establishment found in violation will be fined \$250.

## Law bans smoking on hospital and nursing home grounds

Jaffee's law bans smoking on the grounds of hospitals and nursing homes throughout New York State and within 15 feet of the property lines of these facilities. Secondhand smoke lingers in the air hours after cigarettes have been extinguished, causing or aggravating a wide range of health problems. It can trigger asthma episodes and increases the risk of heart attack. Secondhand smoke exposure is responsible for 2,500 deaths a year in New York State.

Residential health facilities can designate an outdoor smoking zone for patients and their guests.

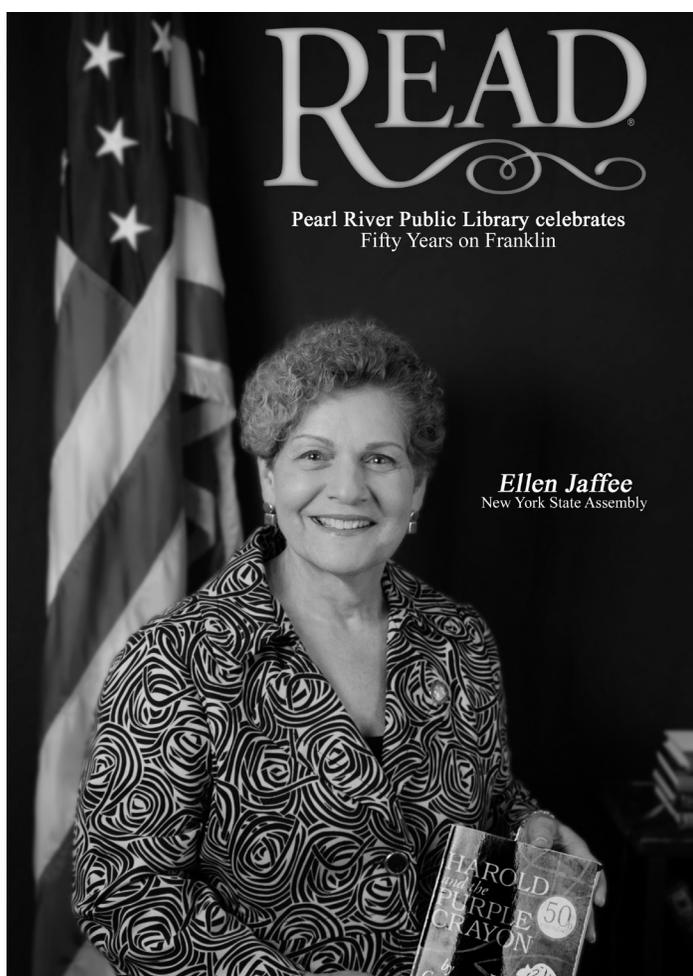


*Assemblywoman Jaffee hosted an event at Nyack Hospital to share information about breast density and support Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. With her are Dr. Patricia Joseph, MD, Director of Breast and Women's Health Prevention Services at Nyack Hospital, (l) Radiologist Dr. Shari Siegel-Goldman, MD, Director of Breast Imaging at Hudson Valley Radiology Associates (HVRA) and Nyack Hospital, (r) and Joann Pushkin, breast cancer survivor-turned-advocate and cofounder, D.E.N.S.E. (Density Education National Survivors' Effort).*

## Jaffee's landmark Breast Density Inform Law helps save lives

Ellen Jaffee's lifesaving Breast Density Inform Law went into effect in January of this year. Density can hide cancers on a mammogram and may increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. The new law requires that every mammography report given to a patient with dense breast tissue will inform her in clear language that she has dense breast tissue and encourages a follow-up conversation with her doctor about her family history and the benefits of supplemental screening. New York's Breast Density Inform Law, the most comprehensive in the nation, serves as a template to other states as they draft similar legislation.

# life in Rockland and throughout New York State



*Assemblywoman Jaffee commemorates the 50th anniversary of Pearl River Library. The library's original building on Franklin Avenue was dedicated Sunday, November 3rd, 1963. It is the site of the garden memorial dedicated to USMC Lieutenant Heinz Ahlmeyer, Jr., a 1961 graduate of Pearl River High School, who was killed in action on May 10th, 1967, his first day in Vietnam. For close to 50 years, the library has been home to the memorial stone and plaque that reads, "Given by his friends, June 1967."*

## State investigation finds more than \$665 million in unclaimed life insurance benefits

Thanks to new regulations created by the Department of Financial Services (DFS) in 2012, insurance companies are now required to inform loved ones if they are a beneficiary of an insurance policy after the policyholder passes away. Governor Cuomo expanded this legislation by signing a law in December 2012 that obligates insurance companies on a quarterly basis to search the records of a deceased policyholder to check for beneficiaries. As a result of this legislation, more than \$665 million was awarded to 81,171 people who had previously not known that they were named in a life insurance policy. If a loved one has passed away and you would like to find lost or unclaimed life insurance policies, you can use the "Lost Policy Finder" application on the DFS website at [www.dfs.ny.gov](http://www.dfs.ny.gov).



*Assemblywoman Jaffee with Kiera Pollock, Deputy Executive Director of Programs and Services at the Center for Safety and Change and the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, Blauvelt-Sparkill Women's Committee, who received an award from the Stop Fear Coalition for their work to end human trafficking.*



*Assemblywoman Jaffee speaking about the release of a report by former NYC Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Al Appleton (right) which found that Rockland does not have a water shortage, it has a water management problem.*

## Jaffee testifies at Public Service Commission hearing on proposed desalination plant

United Water New York has proposed a water treatment plant that would remove salt and pollutants from the Hudson River, to provide Rockland's drinking water. The process is called desalination or desal. In October, the Public Service Commission (PSC) held hearings to ask if Rockland really needs the amount of water the desal plant would provide. Assemblywoman Jaffee testified that all the ways in which Rockland's water needs can be met must be considered before undertaking an enormous, costly project. "In 2006, I enlisted the help of the United States Geological Survey to study Rockland's water supply. The study found that Rockland's groundwater supply is healthier than previously believed. The findings show we have more time to study the situation. We must take the time to get this right."

At the hearing, United Water testified that Rockland needs a water supply project, while water experts testified that Rockland could solve this problem without a large supply project and instead could get millions of gallons a day by fixing leaks in the system, taking serious water conservation steps, and sending less water to New Jersey. The PSC's decision could come at any time.

Rockland County currently sends 7.5 million gallons of water a day to New Jersey because of a law, which requires the flow of water be maintained to ensure the health of downstream waterways. Assemblywoman Jaffee said, "Seven and a half million gallons a day is a random amount, based on the Delaware River Basin, which feeds a larger area than our own Lake Deforest does. I call on the state to find the fair amount to send to New Jersey based on Lake Deforest, not based on another miles away. Before we build a desal plant that will raise our rates, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) must make sure we're not paying to send excess water to New Jersey."

## Don't flush your unused medicines!

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation says it's harmful to flush medicines because of their effects on fish and other marine life. Rockland residents should bring their unused or expired prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines, including controlled substances, to the Rockland County Sheriff's Police Division, 55 New Hempstead Rd., New City, where the drugs will be burned, which is the proper disposal method. This includes unused expired medicines for your pets, too. The Dropbox operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Business Assistance Program for Minority/Women Business Enterprises

### *Have you filed for your M/WBE certification yet?*

Assemblywoman Jaffee has organized valuable and informative workshops in partnership with the PTAC program at the Rockland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) for those who have been actively in business for at least one year. Find out how to grow your business by selling to the government.

### **SESSION III**

**March 13, 2014 | 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

Finkelstein Library

24 Chestnut Street, Spring Valley

### **MAXIMIZE YOUR M/WBE CERTIFICATION**

Find out about:

- *Easy to create marketing documents*
- *How to find agencies who buy what you sell*
- *How to use your time during an appointment*
- *Questions to ask*

### **SESSION IV**

**May 15, 2014 | 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

Rockland Community College, 145 College Road  
The Technology Center, Suffern

## **MINI-MATCHMAKER: MEET, CONNECT AND PROMOTE**

- *Meet with buyers from government agencies and large prime contractors*
- *Establish a connection with potential buyers*
- *Promote what you sell*

Anyone is invited to attend Session III. Only those businesses that are certified or have submitted applications will benefit from Session IV (potential buyers want to meet with certified businesses.) There is still time to begin your certification process before the May 15th event. Contact Liz Kallen (REDC) for information and assistance with the certification process at [lizk@redc.org](mailto:lizk@redc.org).

**For additional information  
contact my Director of Constituent Affairs,  
Lauren Heafy, at [heafyl@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:heafyl@assembly.state.ny.us) or  
call her at (845) 624-4601.**



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### **Jaffee Health Insurance Information Session assists individuals and small businesses**

Assemblywoman Jaffee hosted an information session at the Suffern Public Library on The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, New York's Health Plan Marketplace and the New York Health Benefit Exchange. Topics included how to enroll, what health plan options are available, and how to access available support and financial assistance.

#### **7 things you need to know about the Affordable Care Act for New Yorkers under the New York Health Benefit Exchange:**

1. New affordable and comprehensive health insurance options will be available for New Yorkers.
2. Open enrollment began October 1, 2013 for coverage that begins January 1, 2014.
3. If you earn less than \$45,960 as an individual or \$94,200 for

a family of 4, you may be eligible for financial assistance that will make coverage more affordable.

4. You will not be denied health insurance on the basis of a pre-existing condition.
5. All health insurance options will offer a comprehensive array of services; preventive services will be offered at no cost to you.
6. You can get help enrolling in coverage via:  
Call center; In-person assistor (Navigator or broker);  
or Online via web chat.
7. You pick the plan that is best for you. Compare your plan choices based on price, provider network, or quality score.

**For more information, visit: [www.healthbenefitexchange.ny.gov/](http://www.healthbenefitexchange.ny.gov/)  
or contact Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee at 845-624-4601  
for upcoming information sessions.**