



# BUDGET NEWS

Assemblymember

**John T. McDonald III**

Spring 2016

## 2016-17 STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

### Funding to Combat the Heroin and Opioid Abuse Epidemic



*There is no magic answer to solving this crisis; it is a matter of the community working together in the four areas of education, enforcement, treatment, and recovery.*

The opioid and heroin epidemic has been one and will remain a priority of mine. There is no magic answer to solving this crisis; it is a matter of the community working together in the four areas of education, enforcement, treatment, and recovery. The approved budget includes \$25 million for the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to implement a Heroin and Opiate Treatment Prevention Package. The extra funds that the 2016-17 budget includes for programs like OASAS and the DEC will help to increase the focus on these four areas throughout New York State and in the 108th district, especially as it relates to treatment programs and follow up care.

The Department of Environmental Conservation has allocated \$1 million in the budget to conduct drug collection programs. The programs would include the purchase and distribution of tamper-proof drug collection boxes and other federally-approved drug collection programs to help protect the environment from harmful substances and reduce the risk of addiction through the safe and responsible disposal of opioid pharmaceutical drugs. It is critical we remove from households this potentially dangerous controlled substance which leads to heroin addiction in over 80% of all abusers.

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## Education Funding in SFY 2016-17 Budget



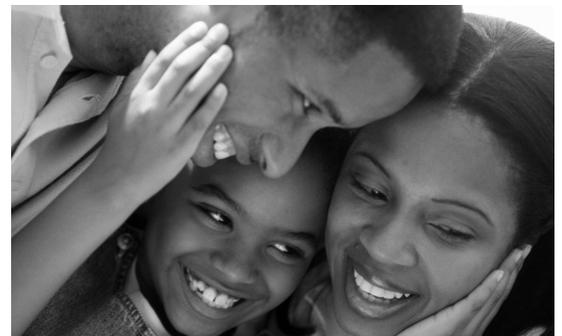
It was a great year for education funding in the SFY 2016-17 budget, which includes \$24.7 billion in funding to General Support for Public Schools (GSPS), an increase of \$1.4 billion, or 5.9 percent, over the 2015-16 School Year (SY).

The spending plan allocates \$627 million in Foundation Aid with \$100 million of that investment earmarked for Community Schools. For those Community Schools in school districts with struggling or persistently struggling schools, an additional \$75 million is provided. Many of these schools are located in the 108th Assembly District including Albany, Cohoes, Troy, and Watervliet. The enacted budget also fully restored the Gap Elimination Adjustment by providing \$434 million in funding for SFY 2016-17.

In keeping with the Assembly's commitment to promote the achievement of all students, the enacted budget earmarks \$20 million for the My Brother's Keeper Initiative to implement the Board of Regents recommendations to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color. Locally, the City of Albany has made this a priority by creating My Brother & Sister's Keeper.

## Cutting Taxes for Middle Class Families

In order to provide additional assistance to working and middle-income families, the budget will cut personal income taxes by \$270 million in 2018 compared to 2017 tax rates. These tax savings will increase to approximately \$3 billion by 2025 when the middle-class tax rate reductions are fully phased in. The 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. Tax rates for brackets in these ranges would decrease from the current 5.9 percent, 6.45 percent and 6.65 percent to 5.5 percent, 5.5 percent and 6.0 percent respectively, over eight years. These new tax cuts will benefit up to 6 million New Yorkers. There is no better way to reward hard working New York residents than by lowering their tax liability to the state. This tax reduction will make for the lowest tax rates in over 70 years and put more money in the pockets and homes of hard working new Yorkers, which is long overdue!



## Higher Education Funding Support



A college education equips students with the tools to grow, learn, and succeed in the evolving economy. The 2016-17 state budget invests in New York's public college system, making higher education more accessible and affordable for all.

The 2016-17 budget ensures that tuition at SUNY schools will not be raised during the coming academic year because every New Yorker has the right to receive an affordable college education. The budget also provides an increase of \$18 million in operating funds for SUNY.

Community colleges, such as Hudson Valley Community College, play a vital role in New York's public higher education system. To strengthen these schools, the budget includes \$13.3 million in support for SUNY Community Colleges for an increase of \$100 per full-time equivalent student. This targeted relief will help offset tuition costs and will enable hard working students to continue towards a path of higher education and employment. Additionally, this support provides relief to our counties who have shouldered the burden in the past of underfunded support for community colleges in the past.

## Investing in Infrastructure, Improving Transportation

Safe, reliable roads, bridges, and public transportation are critical for New Yorkers. DOT's five-year capital plan will provide an increase of \$860 million to the state's Highway and Bridge program. The plan also includes \$27 billion for roads and bridges, which is an increase of \$1.04 billion from last year.

I am most proud of the success we had making sure that upstate investment was on par with downstate. Over \$27 billion for roads and bridges, including a significant funding increase of \$1.04 billion, is also made to DOT's five-year capital plan, which will provide an increase of \$860 million to the state's Highway and Bridge program. The DOT capital plan also will provide an additional \$100 million for non-MTA downstate and upstate transit systems, such as CDTA, over the next four years.

To help local governments pay for road and bridge improvements in order to ensure their safety and reliability, the budget adds \$400 million over four years for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS). As a former Mayor, I know how critical the CHIPS program is to local governments and I am pleased to see such a significant increase in funding for this successful program.



## NYWEA Award

Recently, I was presented with the Nelson A. Rockefeller Award from the New York Water Environment Association in New York City. This award is presented to an elected official who has made a substantial and meaningful contribution to advancing effective environmental programs.

Some past distinguished recipients of this award include Senator John Chafee, Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine, Assemblyman Thomas DiNapoli, Congressman Sherwood Boehlert, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and more recently, Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand.

Receiving this award has been a great honor for me. Since my days as the Mayor of Cohoes, I have been a supporter of water infrastructure improvement and water quality projects starting with the Albany Pool CSO Long Term Control Plan which will bring the standards of the Hudson River to its highest standards. Additionally, the award was presented for my leadership on the creation of the \$200 million Clean Water Infrastructure Grant Program which was established in the 2015 budget to assist local governments in addressing the long-standing issues of water and sewer infrastructure, and we increased funding by \$200 million again in this year's budget. This is the first of its kind grant program by the State in several decades and one that will help to address the issues that plague our local governments, often at the most opportune times.



## Protecting Veterans

Veterans and their families have made invaluable sacrifices for our country; and therefore, it is critical to support them and ensure they have access to vital resources. This year's state budget provides \$1.62 million in restorations and additional funding for veterans over the executive proposal, such as:

- \$500,000 for the Veterans Defense Program, which provides in-depth training, support, and legal assistance to veterans and service members in the New York State criminal and family court systems;
- \$250,000 for the Veterans Farmer Program, which provides grants to help veterans who are beginning farmers;
- \$200,000 for Helmets-to-Hardhats, which connects veterans and transitioning members of the military with training and career opportunities to help ease the transition into civilian life;
- \$100,000 for the Vietnam Veterans of America, which helps support Vietnam veterans and their families; and
- \$25,000 for Veterans Miracle Center, locally here in Albany, which provides veterans with vital goods and services.



It's our responsibility to do everything we can to honor the men and women who fought to defend our country and its values. The state budget provides vital funding for programs that help our veterans and support them as they make the transition back to civilian life once they've come home.

## \$200 Million Increase to NYS Water Infrastructure Improvement Grant Program

The 2016-17 budget includes an additional \$200 million for the NYS Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to assist municipalities in funding water quality infrastructure projects. The grant program was initiated last year by me and my colleague Steve Otis of Westchester, who is also a former Mayor of Rye. The Assembly continues to address the financial crises that many localities face when securing funding for waste water and drinking water infrastructure projects with this one-of-a-kind program that now is fully funded to \$450 million.

As both Steve and I know from our years as Mayors, the need to invest in clean drinking water and sewage treatment results in significant challenges for municipalities that are unable to fund the overall costs of these projects. This grant program is a good start to address an infrastructure system that is woefully in need of support and lacks proper resources.



*Working with Assemblymember Otis (91st Assembly District–Westchester County) in the chamber.*

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Assemblymember McDonald serves on the following committees:

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Alcoholism and Drug Abuse  
Cities  
Insurance  
Mental Health  
Real Property Taxation

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- Higher Education Funding Support
- Cutting Taxes for Middle Class Families
- Investing in Infrastructure, Improving Transportation
- Protecting Veterans
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