



Assemblyman
**Edward C.
Braunstein**

Reports to the People

Spring 2013

Dear Neighbor,

I would like to take this opportunity to give you an update on the 2013 legislative session in Albany. I am proud to say that under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, we once again passed an on-time balanced state budget. The budget includes a minimum wage increase, maintains the lowest middle-class tax rate in 60 years, and includes a \$350 tax rebate for families with a child under the age of 18.

As always, my office is available to assist you. If you are having trouble with state or local government issues, please do not hesitate to contact us. My staff and I are always here to help you obtain benefits, provide information on government programs and develop legislative solutions to community problems.

*Edward C. Braunstein
Member of Assembly
26th District*



Assemblyman Braunstein hosted a rally on August 24, 2012 and a Town Hall on March 7, 2013 with Senator Tony Avella and over 200 members of our community to fight the increase in airplane noise in Northeast Queens.



Assemblyman Braunstein hosted a Senior Health and Wellness Forum at the Selfhelp Clearview Senior Center in Bay Terrace.

Around the Community



Assemblyman Braunstein sponsored our community's annual Toy Drive and received thousands of donations from his constituents, including students at PS 98. The toys were donated to numerous institutions, including children's hospitals, developmental disability organizations and homeless shelters.



Assemblyman Braunstein sponsored our community's 17th annual Valentines for Vets Gift Drive and delivered thousands of donations to hospitalized veterans from our community with the assistance of his staff as well as students and faculty from Holy Cross High School.



Assemblyman Braunstein visited the Bayside Senior Center for the Key Luck Club's Lunar New Year event, celebrating the Year of the Snake.



Congratulations to the winners of Assemblyman Braunstein's Halloween Essay and Drawing Contest 2012. The winners were (L-R) Christopher Du of PS 174, Aaron Omar of PS 115, Wen Fei Lin of PS 203 and Vincent Fong of St. Mel's School.

Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein

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Assemblyman Braunstein announces enhanced co-op and condo tax abatement

Governor Cuomo signed into law vital legislation (A.3354), which was proposed by Assemblyman Braunstein, that makes property taxes more equitable for co-op and condo owners in NYC by raising a partial tax abatement from 17.5% retroactively on June 30, 2012 to 25% in 2013 and over 28% by 2015 for eligible properties whose average assessed value is less than \$50,000 (approximately \$500,000 market value).

“Since my tenure in the Assembly began in 2011, I have fought to reduce the outrageously high and inequitable property tax assessments levied on many of our middle-class co-ops in the outer boroughs,” said Assemblyman Braunstein. “This is a major victory for the vast majority of co-op owners in Northeast Queens, including thousands of senior citizens on fixed incomes. This progressive legislation ends the tax abatement for investors and those who are not using their properties as their primary residence, and transfers the cost savings to our middle-class families and seniors so that they can afford to stay in their homes.”

“Every four years, New York State has extended a program granting most NYC co-op and condo owners a 17.5% abatement on their property taxes, in an attempt to make the tax rates commensurate with those of single-family homeowners. For many co-op owners, especially those in Northeast Queens who were hit with monstrous

tax hikes over the last two years, this program did not accomplish its goal. While more comprehensive reform is still necessary, this legislation helps to ensure that co-op property taxes are comparable to those of single-family residences,” said Assemblyman Braunstein.

Co-op and condo owners who have put their unit in a trust, but still continue to reside in their home, will be considered primary residents under this new abatement. There was some initial confusion regarding this issue, but at the urging of Assemblyman Braunstein, the state legislature passed a bill (A.6658) to remedy this issue.

Assemblyman Braunstein's fraudulent attorney legislation signed into law

Governor Andrew Cuomo signed legislation, introduced by Assemblyman Braunstein, which strengthens the existing law protecting New Yorkers who suffer serious harm caused by individuals who falsely represent themselves as lawyers (A.5700-A).

“Over the past several years, there have been hundreds of complaints, particularly by immigrants, who have been victimized by fraudulent attorneys,” said Assemblyman Braunstein. “No one should ever be victimized by dishonest con artists claiming to be lawyers. By having this law signed, we are standing up for the rights of all New Yorkers by ensuring that individuals receive proper legal assistance.”

For most professions licensed by New York State, unlicensed

practice constitutes a class E felony, but under current law, unlicensed practice of law constitutes a misdemeanor. The new law will make serious instances of unlicensed practice of law a felony. The new law takes effect November 1, 2013.

“We have no tolerance for scam artists who pose as lawyers and deceive New Yorkers in need of legal help,” said Governor Cuomo. “This new law will help hold accountable individuals who defraud New Yorkers by offering services they are not licensed to provide. I thank the bill sponsors for their efforts on this important legislation.”



Assemblyman Braunstein attended the Alley Pond Environmental Center's 33rd Annual Thomas Urban Bird Literary Art Contest and is pictured here with the contest winners.



Assemblyman Braunstein attended the National Night Out Against Crime on August 8, 2012 at the 109th and 111th Precincts.

Assemblyman Braunstein helps pass early state budget that assists hardworking New Yorkers

Budget increases minimum wage, education funding, and cuts taxes for middle-class families

The 2013-14 state budget closes a \$1.4 billion budget gap and increases the state's minimum wage, bolsters education funding, and cuts taxes for middle-class families.

"I am proud to have once again voted for an early budget which provides a balanced spending plan that delivers for hardworking New Yorkers," said Assemblyman Braunstein. "The budget addresses fundamental issues facing our families, including the Assembly Majority's longtime commitment to increasing the state's minimum wage and providing our schools the necessary funding for our children to receive a quality education. By bringing tax relief to middle-class families, we are ushering in a stronger economic recovery throughout New York."

To continue providing a fairer tax system in New York, the 2013-14 state budget extends the current tax rate first implemented in 2012, locking in the lowest tax rate for middle-class families in 60 years. "Approximately 4.4 million taxpayers, more than 99 percent of those filing statewide, benefited from \$690 million in tax relief stemming from the tax restructuring, which is why this multi-year extension is so critical for hardworking families," said Assemblyman Braunstein.

The enacted budget includes a \$350 rebate for families with a child under the age of 18 and applies to families earning between \$40,000 and \$300,000 annually.

The budget allocates \$8.28 billion to NYC schools, an increase of \$363.9 million over last year. The spending plan increases community college base aid by \$150 per-full-time equivalent student for the second year in a row. The budget also includes \$25 million for full-day and half-day pre-kindergarten grants as well as \$9 million, a 50% increase from last year, to reimburse independent and religious schools for costs incurred as a result of state mandated programs.

"A community is only as strong as its schools," said Assemblyman Braunstein. "By increasing school aid we will be able to pro-

vide our children and young adults with a quality education, hold property taxes in check and keep the dream of a college degree alive for more working families. New York has one of the finest higher education systems in the nation. It's vital that we continue to grow our higher education system and improve infrastructure so students have quality places to learn."

The budget increases the state's minimum wage to \$9.00 per hour by 2016. The wage will gradually increase over the next three years from \$7.25 to \$8.00 per hour on Dec. 31, 2013; to \$8.75 on Dec. 31, 2014; and then to \$9.00 per hour on Dec. 31, 2015. The increase to the minimum wage will directly benefit 925,000 New Yorkers currently earning below \$9.00 an hour, which is over 10 percent of the state's employed population.

"New Yorkers overwhelmingly support raising the minimum wage, and it will help jumpstart consumer spending and spur the economy," said Assemblyman Braunstein. "This is a huge victory for not only minimum-wage employees, but workers across the state."

Additionally, the budget includes \$34.3 million to protect the right of spousal refusal, ensuring that seniors with ailing spouses who are in need of long-term care services are protected against losing assets that are critical to their well-being. "It's imperative that we continue to fund essential health care services on which senior citizens and their families depend," said Assemblyman Braunstein.

"I am proud to have once again voted for an early budget which provides a balanced spending plan that delivers for hardworking New Yorkers."

-Assemblyman Braunstein



Assemblyman Braunstein attended the Harriet & Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center's annual Holocaust Freedom Seder and received the Freedom Award on March 24, 2013. Assemblyman Braunstein is pictured here with Dr. Arthur Flug, Executive Director of the Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center.



Assemblyman Braunstein joined the New York Taxi Workers Alliance for a prayer vigil for Key Chun Kim after Kim was brutally assaulted by a passenger in his taxi. Assemblyman Braunstein is pictured here with Assemblyman Ron Kim, Assemblyman Walter Mosley, and members of Key Chun Kim's family.