



Assemblymember

PATRICIA A. FAHY



Legislative Budget Report to the 109th Assembly District
SPRING 2017

Dear Neighbors,

I am honored to represent you in the New York State Assembly and continue to work for each of you in Albany, Bethlehem, Guilderland and New Scotland.

This edition of the Legislative and Community Report includes updates on the passage of the much discussed 2017-2018 budget, legislative priorities for the remainder of session and other items of interest to 109th District residents.

PATRICIA A. FAHY
Member of Assembly, 109th District



In recognition of Women's History month in March, Assemblymember Fahy presents resolutions to three trailblazing Capital Region Women of Distinction pictured left to right; Alice Begley, Rezsins Adams and Nell Stokes.

Summer Activities in the Capital Region

Summer is just around the corner, which means the start of warm-weather events across the region.

Summer Camps and Childcare: <http://www.cdccc.org/>

Farmers' Markets: http://www.albany.com/guide/shopping_farmmarkets.cfm

Festivals and Fairs: <http://www.albany.com/events/festivals/>



SPRING 2017 BUDGET UPDATE

After weeks of stops and starts in negotiations, the 2017-18 budget was passed on April 10th. Some of the more notable accomplishments this budget season include: passing ride sharing services for upstate, securing additional funding for water infrastructure improvement, reforming New York's indigent legal defense system, increasing K-12 education aid, and making higher education more accessible.



Securing Capital City funding for Albany was one of the biggest successes of this year's budget. Assemblymember Fahy joins local elected officials to advocate for \$12.5 million in funding for the City of Albany.

Albany Receives Capital City Funding. One of my top budget priorities was securing the \$12.5 million that was allocated in the final state budget to eliminate the city's budget deficit for fiscal year 2017 without the need for additional cuts from public safety

and other programs. Albany's plight is exacerbated by the fact that over 60% of Albany's property is tax exempt, and I will continue to advocate for a long term solution to this problem.

Criminal Justice and Legal Services

Indigent Legal Services. The final budget included an overdue criminal justice reform on ILS modeled after a bill I have sponsored for the past couple of years. The state will fully implement the *Hurrell-Harring* agreement, at the cost of \$250 million phased in over 5 years. This agreement improves the quality of legal representation for poor people, reduces caseloads, and reimburses counties for providing these services. Going forward, this measure will relieve some of the unfunded mandates faced by counties, helping local governments function better and eliminating a patchwork system of justice in New York.



Indigent Defense Services reform was one of Assemblymember Fahy's top priorities this budget season. The Assemblymember spins the "Wheel of Justice" to determine her fate in New York's patchwork system of justice, which was reformed this year.

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Assemblymember Fahy joins Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and other legislators to mark the passage of critical criminal justice reforms, including Indigent Legal Services reform and “Raise the Age.”

Raise the Age. “Raise the Age” criminal justice reforms are a big step forward in ensuring young people have a chance to learn from their mistakes so that they can continue their education, gain employment and have a real future. The age of criminal responsibility will be changed from 16 to 18 for certain non-violent young offenders. New York was one of the last states to enact this change to criminal law, so that 16- and 17-year-olds charged with misdemeanors and non-violent felonies will be tried in family court following a phase-in period.



In some cases, water infrastructure in the Capital Region dates back to the Civil War. Assemblymember Fahy joins Assemblymember John McDonald and other local officials to advocate for a proposal to aid municipalities in upgrading their water and sewer infrastructure.

Water Infrastructure and Environment

Water Infrastructure. Earlier this session I introduced legislation to amend the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, to prioritize water infrastructure projects undertaken by multiple communities in a region, as well as encouraging these types of shared services by significantly increasing the amount of state money available to them. The Albany CSO Pool Communities, a collaboration of six communities in the Capital Region, which is a model for this legislation, estimates that its long-term water infrastructure control plan will cost \$98 million. The final budget included \$2.5 billion for water infrastructure improvements; included in that money is \$150 million for inter-municipal water infrastructure projects.

Environmental Protection Fund. The Environmental Protection Fund is an essential tool for protecting New York’s most valuable natural assets. The budget invests \$300 million into the fund, including \$16 million for waterfront revitalization, and \$36.3 million for land acquisition. These funds will help to continue reducing greenhouse gas emissions, eradicating invasive species and addressing climate change in our local communities. The EPF supports environmental non-profits and other agencies by providing grants to improve recycling practices, conserve farmland, and clean up water front property.

Tourism and Transportation

Empire State Trail. The newly approved Empire State Trail will stretch from Albany to Buffalo and from New York City to Canada. The trail will be the longest multi-use trail in the United States. A 2014 study put the economic impact of the Erie Canalway Trail alone at \$253 million annually with over 3,000 jobs created; this impact will only increase when a fully connected system is completed.



Assemblymember Fahy welcomes a group of Pharmacy Students from the Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences to her office in the Legislative Office Building.

Ride Hailing. Uber and Lyft are coming to upstate! My office received more calls about ridesharing services during budget negotiations than any other issue, and I’m pleased to share that these services will be coming to the Capital District this summer. The services will be available starting this summer and will be regulated by the DMV. While I’m pleased to finally see these services come to Upstate, I will continue to advocate for ride hailing to be more fully accessible to the disabled.

Transportation Infrastructure and Public Transit. New York has some of the nation’s oldest infrastructure, and the budget includes funding for many much-needed updates. The budget includes increases of \$130 million for the Department of Transportation Road and Bridge Capital Plan, \$65 million for the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) and Pave NY. Additionally, the budget increases state investment in public transit. The final budget includes an additional \$4 million over last year’s budget for Upstate public transit operating aid, and an additional \$20 million in non-MTA capital funding.



Assemblymember Fahy attends the groundbreaking for the new location of the Albany Distilling Company. Craft brewing and beverages are New York industries experiencing exponential growth in Upstate.

K-12 Education, Higher Education and Library Funding

Excelsior Scholarship and Enhanced Tuition Awards. The Excelsior Scholarship, a groundbreaking initiative that will be phased-in to make SUNY schools tuition free for New York families who earn less than \$125,000 annually (phased in from \$100,000), will be available to NYS students attending SUNY schools starting this fall. Students who attend a private college and whose families earn less than \$125,000 annually would also be eligible for an Enhanced Tuition Award of up to \$6,000. Visit <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/> for more information on the Excelsior Scholarship and Enhanced Tuition Awards.

K-12 and Foundation Aid. An increase of over \$1 billion for K-12 education aid, for a total of \$25.7 billion, which is a 4.1 percent increase from last year’s budget. This includes a \$700 million increase for foundation aid, for a total of \$17.2 billion in

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Assemblymember Fahy held several community conversations at libraries in the 109th District to discuss the highlights of the state budget and implications for the community.

direct aid to schools. Also included is an \$817 million investment in prekindergarten programs, and \$150 million to convert schools into community schools that offer comprehensive services for at-risk students and families.

Library Funding. Public libraries are essential neighborhood assets, offering everything from books as well as educational materials to technology and job search tools and local community programs to all. To that end, the enacted budget makes significant investments in libraries and library capital support to improve building infrastructure, update technology and enhance equipment. The budget restores aid to public libraries by \$4 million to ensure they can continue providing services and resources to residents, for a total of \$95.6 million. In addition, the budget provides an increase of \$10 million in capital funding for a total of \$24 million.

Health and Human Services

Refugee Resettlement. Immigrants and refugees are a valued segment of New York's rich heritage, adding diversity to our neighborhoods. As part of our commitment to support immigrants and refugees in our communities, \$2 million was included for refugee resettlement in the final budget, an unprecedented investment. These vital programs assist individuals in speeding the transition and finding jobs and education in a new country far from the often tragic circumstances they left behind. This funding will also help offset cuts in federal funding for New York State.

Heroin and Opioid Epidemic. The epidemic of opioid addiction has devastated families across upstate. The budget includes a \$43 million increase to combat the growing heroin and opioid addiction crisis in New York, for a total of \$213 million to support a variety of treatment and prevention programs. This includes funding for 600 new opioid addiction treatment program slots, and for the establishment of 10 new regional partnerships to combat this epidemic.

Small Business and Worker's Compensation Reform

Small businesses are the backbone of the State's economy, accounting for approximately 43 percent of all private sector jobs in New York. As a result of changes in the budget, the New York Compensation Insurance Rating Board has submitted an overall workers' compensation rate decrease of approximately 4.5 percent, which will save employers an estimated \$400 million this year in workers' compensation premiums. These savings will help small business owners reinvest in their companies and their employees. This reform was the result of years of negotiations between business and labor groups and should create a fairer system for employers and workers, including swifter worker's compensation hearings for workers.



Our intern, Blessing Uzoeshi, has been an incredible help to our office this session. Blessing is an Albany native and UAlbany student who will graduate in May with a BA in History.

Did You Know?



Thacher Park Visitor Center Open. For generations, John Boyd Thacher State Park has been a jewel of the Capital Region. The opening of the Thacher Park Center this past month should elevate this landmark to a new height and I hope will lead to an exponential increase in new visitors! For more information visit: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/128/>

United Way 2-1-1 Program. Do you or someone you know need help connecting with human services in the Capital Region? 2-1-1 is an information hotline that enables residents to connect with different social services in their area, such as getting help with groceries, paying rent and other services. To connect with this service, simply dial 2-1-1.

Historic Guilderland Cobblestone Schoolhouse to Receive Repairs. In April, the initial budget proposal of the Guilderland School Board excluded repair funds for an historic Civil War era schoolhouse in Guilderland. I'm pleased to share that the school board reversed its decision to fund the repair of the schoolhouse, and I look forward to working with the board to preserve this historic education gem.

Erie Canal Prepares to Celebrate 200th Anniversary this Year. The Erie Canal truly opened the way, by connecting distant waterways, for New York to become the economic engine it is today. This marvel of infrastructure transformed New York into an economic powerhouse and continues to support development in upstate communities to this day. The Albany Institute of History & Art has a diverse collection of items that relate to the Erie Canal. The next "spotlight" exhibition will include materials that narrate a story of the original Erie Canal through the Barge Canal using paintings, drawings, maps, photographs, books, broadsides, silver, ceramics, and more. For celebrations of the anniversary of the canal visit: <https://eriecanalway.org/explore/events>

Job Opportunities. New York State has set up a job portal entitled Jobs Express, where thousands of private and public sector jobs are listed. Visit jobs.ny.gov for more information on how to apply for these opportunities.



Assemblymember Fahy addresses a group of students from a local elementary school as they tour the Capitol Complex.

2017 Legislative Updates

Childcare. In an effort to increase access to affordable childcare, I joined a group of colleagues from the Legislative Women's Caucus to call for an increase in funding for New York's underfunded childcare services. Unfortunately, the final budget cut \$7 million from child care subsidies for low-income families, at a time when only 17% of eligible families actually receive childcare services, so we are renewing efforts to increase funding. The Child Care Tax Credit, however, has been expanded to make more families eligible to save on childcare expenses.

Oil Trains. I sponsored a bill that recently passed the Assembly which calls for rail companies to prove financial security or insurance to cover cleanup and decontamination costs associated with any potential oil spill or disaster. Since I introduced this legislation in 2014, the growth of crude oil transportation has continued to climb. With major storage facilities at the Port of Albany, upstate cities like Albany are at a convergence of major oil freight lines. A disaster with these trains could have devastating consequences as we've seen elsewhere in North America. By requiring oil companies to be fully insured, it incentivizes safety measures to help protect our communities.

New Bill Calls for Transparency with Release of Tax Returns. This legislative session, I joined colleagues to push for legislation that would increase transparency of elected official's financial interests. The purpose of the bill would require the release of NYS



Assemblymember Fahy stands with Mayor Sheehan and fellow legislators to support resettlement funding for refugees. Upstate New York is a major economic beneficiary of refugee resettlement.

tax returns of statewide elected officials. I also sponsor a bill which would require candidates for President to release their federal tax returns in order to appear on the New York State ballot.



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<http://nyassembly.gov/mem/?ad=109&sh=enews>

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