



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Senators Klein And Adams Propose Holiday Driver Relief Package

JEFFREY D. KLEIN May 23, 2008



*Call For Suspension of Tolls on Bridges and Tunnels on Major Holidays*

*Proposes Gas Tax Rebate for Middle and Working Class Families*

NEW YORK-With 2.2 million New Yorkers traveling by car this weekend, about 360,000 fewer than last year according to the AAA, and New York gas prices averaging over \$4.10 a gallon, Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) and Senator Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn) announced legislation to suspend the tolls on bridges and tunnels in and around New York City and on the Tappan Zee Bridge during major holidays and holiday weekends in

order to ease traffic congestion and help drivers save on tolls and gas. In addition, the Senators proposed a gas tax rebate based on income with savings up to \$200 for middle and working class families.

"Now more than ever - with gas prices soaring and the start of the summer driving season – we need to provide real relief for working class families. Suspending bridge and tunnel tolls will help improve traffic flow, reduce air pollution, and reduce fuel consumption," said Senator Klein standing today at the entrance to the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. "In addition, a gas tax rebate will ensure that the savings are transmitted directly to the consumer rather than the oil companies, and make travel all together more cost effective."

The first proposal is expected to save motorists up to \$50 million in tolls, while the lost revenue to the MTA would be partially offset by a reduction in the salary and overtime costs associated with staffing toll collection booths during major holidays. Each year, 300 million toll-paying vehicles cross MTA bridges and tunnels, generating \$1.251 billion in revenue. Eliminating these tolls for these 12.5 days would result in a revenue reduction of approximately \$43-\$50 million.

The measure would also apply to drivers crossing the New York State Thruway Authority's Tappan Zee Bridge, where studies of replacement alternatives have put peak traffic at 170,000 vehicles per day. Eliminating tolls on major holiday weekends on the Tappan Zee would save drivers approximately \$5 million per year.

"Suspending the collection of tolls during holidays will improve traffic flow and ease congestion during these periods of peak travel. The moratorium would also save many thousands of gallons of gasoline wasted by idling or slow-moving vehicles at a time when the cost of gas is soaring, minimize pollutants spewed into the atmosphere in an era of acute concern over our environment and global warming, save thousands of hours motorists spend waiting in long toll lines, and even reduce the life-threatening accidents resulting from the need to slow to a stop at toll plazas," added Senator Adams.

Unlike the recently defeated gas tax holiday, the Senators' proposal would ensure that the savings is passed directly to the driver/consumer. For example, if a family travels over the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and already pays \$48 for a full tank of gas, they would reap a potential savings of \$20 (including the return trip), or 13.6% less of what the trip would otherwise cost. There would be a 10.6% saving on all bridges/tunnels with a \$5 toll, and a roughly 5% savings on remaining \$2.50 tolls.

Senator Klein's legislation would suspend tolls on the following bridges and tunnels, Tappan Zee (\$4.50), Throggs Neck (\$10 round-trip), Bronx-Whitestone (\$10 round-trip), Verrazano-Narrows (\$20 round-trip), Queens Midtown (\$10 round-trip), Brooklyn Battery (\$10 round-trip), Crossbay (\$5 round-trip), Marine Parkway (\$5 round-trip), Triborough (\$10 round-trip), and Henry Hudson (\$5.50 round-trip) during the following holidays: Memorial Day weekend, Independence Day weekend, Labor Day weekend, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years Day.

Similarly, the proposed gas tax rebate would provide much needed relief in the summer driving season. Downstate, families with a motor vehicle registered in the State of New York whose annual income is below \$90K would receive a \$100 rebate. The rebate would increase to \$200 for couples filing jointly with an annual income below \$150K.

Upstate, the rebate would be adjusted so that families with an annual income of \$75K would receive a \$100 rebate, while couples filing jointly whose annual income is below \$125K., would receive \$200. **According to census data there are just over 3 million New Yorkers with an annual income of 150K. The rebate would result in a direct savings of roughly \$6 million.**

The following is a break down of census data for New York State according to income level and vehicle ownership:

**Population As a Function of Income and Vehicle Ownership**

	VEH	Under \$25,000	\$25,000 to \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$75,000	\$75,000 to \$100,000	\$100,000 to \$125,000
0		415,142	233,047	113,186	45,449	29,630
1		267,773	360,707	258,962	121,595	76,126
2		126,804	331,475			