



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Westchester Residents Speak Out on State Budget

JEFFREY D. KLEIN March 19, 2010

| ISSUE: **CITIES, EDUCATION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL SERVICES, SMALL BUSINESS**

Senator Klein and Westchester Delegation Hold Public Budget Hearing

WHITE PLAINS, NY- State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) and the NYS Senate's Westchester Delegation listened to more than two-dozen Westchester residents, community groups, businesses, and local elected officials at a public budget hearing in Greenburgh on Friday. Community members expressed their concerns regarding high property taxes, the burden of the MTA Payroll tax, potential cuts in state aid to municipalities, and a wide range of other issues.

"Given the tough fiscal choices we're faced with this budget season, the input of Westchester residents on key matters impacting our region is more important than ever. I am wholly committed to making sure that the voices and concerns of Westchester are heard loud and clear in the halls of the Capitol as we work together to bring real property tax relief, put more money back in taxpayers' pockets, and ensure that our communities stay strong and vibrant," said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

The five senators representing Westchester County formed the Westchester Delegation in an effort to more effectively advocate for the needs and concerns of their constituents.

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) chairs the delegation, which, in addition to Senator Klein, includes Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-36th District), Senator Vincent Leibel (R-40th District), and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-35th District).

On Thursday, March 18th, the Senate passed Senator Klein's legislation to provide vital property and school tax relief to the middle class and seniors in a nearly unanimous vote. Senator Klein's legislation (S.6212) restores STAR property tax rebate checks for senior homeowners earning less than \$150,000, creates a "circuit breaker" property tax rebate for the middle class, and caps local school property tax increases. The bill would put more money directly back into the pockets of middle income families and seniors across the state.

This week, Senator Klein also delivered a number of promising revenue generating solutions for Westchester and New York. On Wednesday, the Senate passed legislation sponsored by Senator Klein to expand hours and types of games for video lottery terminals (VLT), which is expected to generate an additional \$100 million annually for state aid to education. Westchester is home to two VLT operating race tracks, located in Yonkers.

Earlier in the week, the Senate passed Senator Klein's resolution calling on the U.S. House of Representatives to pass legislation banning the shipment of cigarettes via the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). In 2000, Senator Klein passed a law, the first of its kind in the nation, banning the direct sale of cigarettes over the internet and by mail-order to New York consumers. The law applied to Federal Express, UPS, and other similar shippers, but not the USPS; Senator Klein has since been working with federal legislators to enact a ban on the USPS as well. The new federal legislation, which has now passed in both houses of Congress, is expected to help New York State recoup hundreds of millions of dollars in lost cigarette tax revenue annually.

Finally, Senator Klein remains a staunch advocate for Westchester's independent and religious schools, particularly in light of the added burden the MTA's recently instituted payroll tax has caused. Earlier this month, Senator Klein met with the superintendents of

the Westchester and Bronx County Catholic school systems to discuss the importance of his legislation (S5832) to force the state to fully reimburse independent and religious for cost of their payroll tax payments, as the state currently does for public schools. This reimbursement would total approximately six million dollars annually to these schools statewide.