



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

## STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN BONACIC: On State Budget Agreement

JOHN J. BONACIC March 21, 2013

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I am pleased the Legislature is on its way to adopting an early State budget that reduces the tax burden on New Yorkers and helps small businesses grow, all while funding essential governmental services. I am most pleased that the budget:

- Provides for an increase of nearly \$1 billion for education;
- Reduces the tax burden on families with children by providing a new child tax credit starting in 2014;
- Provides a hiring tax credit to help returning soldiers and young people find work, including a permanent tax credit for hiring veterans;
- Initiates the *Market-NY* program to increase support for tourism and agriculture;
- Increases CHIPS aid for local roads and bridges by \$75 million. This is the first increase in five years.

Beyond prioritizing spending though, I am especially pleased the State is prioritizing accountability and innovation in education. Two years ago, even when Governor Cuomo opposed it, I led the effort to better fund education by maintaining the Millionaire's tax. This year, the State will successfully build on that fairer funding of our schools by enhancing accountability in the spending of hard-earned taxpayer dollars, including: State increases being tied to teacher evaluations; increased standards for teacher

certification; and rewarding high performing teachers with annual stipends for the most effective teachers – starting with math and science.

In addition, the budget provides for:

**Extended Learning Time:** Our nation is far behind others in terms of how much time students spend in the classroom. In order to provide increased learning opportunities, the Budget supports high-quality extended school day or extended school year programs, with academically enriched programming. Schools that apply to participate in the program must agree to expand learning time by 25 percent. The state will cover the full cost of expanding learning time for students. *Our students cannot be left behind and must have an opportunity to lead the world in areas such as math, science, and engineering.*

**Enhanced School-Community Services.** The Budget supports an innovative program designed to transform schools into community hubs that integrate social, health and other services, as well as after-school programming to support students and their families.

Beyond Education, the budget agreement increases the minimum wage. Currently, nineteen other states have higher minimum wages than New York. The Budget raises the minimum wage from \$7.25/hour to \$9.00/hour over three years, beginning with \$8.00 by the end of 2013, \$8.75 by the end of 2014, and \$9.00 by the end of 2015. The budget also lowers taxes by eliminating a surcharge on electric, gas, water and steam utilities over three years beginning in 2014-15.

The budget shows that bi-partisan government finds compromises and addresses the issues New Yorkers care most about. I look forward to adopting a balanced and early State budget over the next few days.