



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Senator Rivera Speaks on the Senate's Passing of the 2013-2014 Budget

GUSTAVO RIVERA April 1, 2013

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Expresses disappointment regarding minimum wage, SUNY Downstate and OPWDD funding cut; celebrates transfer of Fulton Correctional Facility

Albany, NY - Senator Gustavo Rivera (D-Bronx) joined his colleagues in the State Senate Tuesday night and Wednesday morning to vote on the final six bills of the 2013-2014 Budget. Senator Rivera voted against four of the ten total budget bills, including the Education, Labor and Family Assistance bill, the Revenue bill, the Aid to Localities Appropriation bill, and the Health and Mental Hygiene bill.

"I commend Governor Cuomo on passing an on-time budget for the third year in a row, an accomplishment that has not been achieved in our state in almost 30 years. That being said, many aspects of the 2013-2014 Budget fail to improve the lives of working families," said Senator Gustavo Rivera.

One of the main issues that had many opponents on the Senate floor was the minimum wage deal, which failed to raise the minimum wage to \$9 an hour until 2016, did not include indexing to the rate of inflation and excluded certain service workers. Furthermore, the deal also includes a tax credit that benefits companies who hire seasonal workers between the ages 16 to 19, which could result in an incentive to fire older workers who can't generate the credit and will likely impact candidates over the age of 20 looking for part-time work since employers get no tax advantage by hiring them. Many Democrats, including Senator Rivera, advocated for the minimum wage deal to be removed from the budget and be introduced as a separate bill on the floor of the Senate.

"Not only did the Education, Labor and Family Assistance budget bill completely omit funding for the DREAM Act, it proposes a minimum wage increase that does not meet the immediate needs of our workforce and that will be outdated by the time it reaches fruition. Investing in our youth and our workforce is of vital importance and will only strengthen our economy and society," said Senator Rivera.

Senator Rivera speaks on the Education, Labor and Family Assistance bill:

<http://youtu.be/WznXL8WMBKQ>

As the ranking member of the Health Committee, Senator Rivera was as well disappointed that public health programs were not made more of a priority during the budget process. Main issues of concern include a failure to allocate funds to save SUNY Downstate Hospital and, instead, the approval of a plan to allow partial or full privatization of some of SUNY Downstate's healthcare services. Additionally, Senator Rivera expressed disappointment that a \$90 million cut in state funding, compounded by a loss of a 1-to-1 federal match, to the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and \$20 million in cuts to public health programs were voted through.

"It is unacceptable that public health was not made a priority during the budget process. Not providing SUNY Downstate with the appropriate resources to remain open and allowing the potential privatization of the hospital creates a worrisome precedent that could ultimately lead to the restructuring of New York's healthcare system at the expense of patients" said Senator Rivera. "In addition, it is irresponsible to cut funding to OPWDD and for public health programs at a time when they are providing essential services to countless New Yorkers"

Senator Rivera speaks on SUNY Downstate:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Id5sGsNhSbI>

Alternatively, Senator Rivera was pleased that the Public Protection and General Government budget bill, which was passed by the Senate Sunday afternoon, included the transfer of the Fulton Correctional Facility and extended various criminal justice and public safety programs.

"I am particularly pleased to report that the Fulton Correctional Facility in the Bronx will be transferred to the Thomas Mott Osborne Memorial Fund to be converted into a comprehensive reentry center and that they will be eligible to receive \$6 million in capital economic transformation funding," said Senator Rivera. "The restructuring of the Fulton facility will provide thousands of Bronxites transitioning back into society with the necessary resources and skills to be productive members of the community. Fulton will not only aid in reducing our rates of recidivism in the Bronx, but it will also encourage job creation in our community."

Senator Rivera speaks on the transfer of the Fulton Correctional Facility:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbiEF3qBXXc&feature=youtu.be>