



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Praises on-Time Budget Passed in Albany

TONY AVELLA April 1, 2014

# NEWS in Senator Tony Avella Senate District

---

ell Boulevard, Suite C • Bayside, NY 11361 • (718) 357-3000

## LEASE:

*Budget delivers on variety of promises made by Senator Avella to students, parents, middle class families and senior citizens State-wide*

(Albany, NY) Senator Tony Avella was proud to cast his vote yesterday for the fourth consecutive on-time budget passed by the State Legislature late last night and signed into law by Governor Cuomo shortly before midnight. The deadline for passing the State budget is April 1<sup>st</sup>.

In addition to universal Pre-Kindergarten funding, increased funding for day care programs, corporate tax reform, and a property tax freeze, this year's \$138 billion spending plan includes a number of initiatives spearheaded by Senator Avella to bring resources back to the 11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District and enact real change in Albany.

“The budget which was passed today is the budget of filled promises and accomplished goals,” stated Senator Avella. “By working in a collaborative way, the State Legislature was able to provide tax relief to hard working families, expand discount programs for senior citizens, ensure that our children have the resources they need to succeed academically, and provide higher education funding all the while maintaining a fiscal responsibility that has been key to restoring the public’s faith in efficient government.”

The budget provides a new \$85 million “Circuit Breaker” tax relief program for qualifying homeowners, renters, and coop and condo owners who will be eligible to receive a refundable tax credit against their personal State income tax.

The original proposal entailed tax relief only for New York renters but Senator Avella successfully advocated to expand the income tax credit to include small homeowners in the City of New York, which now also includes condominiums and cooperative apartment owners. As a result, the final budget will provide a much needed break to both renters and small homeowners at a time when many residents are facing constant increases in their rent and property taxes.

“During this year’s budget negotiations, the State Legislature worked in a bi-partisan way to implement a much needed tax relief program for all New Yorkers,” stated Senator Avella. “I commend Senate Leaders Dean Skelos and Jeffrey Klein as well as Governor Cuomo for ensuring that New York City residents receive this long overdue tax break.”

As a direct result of tireless efforts by the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), the budget also provides an expansion of the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) programs.

The approved budget provides an increase in the income threshold for seniors participating in SCRIE from \$29,000 to \$50,000, with the increase taking effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> and lasting through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Also in the budget is an allocation of \$4.1 million within the Department of Health to expand the income eligibility for EPIC to \$75,00 from the current \$35,000 level for singles and to \$100,000 from the current \$50,000 level for married enrollees.

“Our senior citizens are the backbone of this country who deserve every possible relief that the State is able to provide” stated Senator Avella, as the newest member of the IDC. “Oftentimes, seniors are left struggling with ever increasing healthcare and rental costs, which is simply unacceptable. I commend my fellow members of the IDC for their tireless efforts to expand these programs, which will now enable more seniors to enjoy the benefits of these important programs.”

Senator Avella was also glad to announce an increase in the State's estate tax exemption level from the current \$1 million threshold to an eventual \$5.25 million, falling in line with the existing federal exemption limit. Senator Avella had previously introduced legislation in the Senate earlier this year calling for the increase.

"The threshold increase will lift an unnecessary burden on many family owned and closely-held businesses throughout the State," continued Senator Avella. "Raising the threshold will encourage many of our residents and business owners to continue to live and do business within New York."

Furthermore, Senator Avella, who has been a relentless public school advocate, was thrilled to announce the inclusion of a \$1.1 billion, or a 5.3% percent increase in the overall General Support for Public Schools (GSPS), with high needs district receiving nearly 70% of the increase. GSPS also includes a new statewide \$340 million universal pre-k program which will benefit tens of thousands of four year olds come September, with a majority, \$300,000 of the funds going towards New York City. This initiative will enable New York's schools to expand and provide vital resources to our students.

"Public school funding has always been my top priority, dating back to my tenure in the City Council," stated Senator Avella. "This year's budget provides necessary resources to our public schools which will ensure that our children come first, period. It also provides the first ever State-wide full-day pre-kindergarten program."

"Overall, this year's budget is a true win for the State, as well as the 11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District," Senator Avella stated. "It is also a budget that speaks for itself in terms of the benefits allocated to our students, parents, middle class families and senior citizens in addition to tens of thousands of four year old children who will finally be eligible for universal Pre-K this year. The State budget also delivered on the promise to address the highly controversial Common Core Standards and student privacy concerns, to increase the Tuition Assistance Award program, to provide a 2% Cost of Living Adjustment for direct care workers, to increase Environmental Protection Fund funding by \$4 million, and to place a 30% rent cap for people living with HIV/AIDS, among many more accomplishments. I am proud to stand with my colleagues and say that this was a job well done."

Senator Avella concluded, "Although our work on campaign finance reform and strengthening environmental programs is not yet finished, I will continue to work with State Legislators to ensure that the discussion on these important issues does not cease."