



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

## Senate Passes LaValle Bills To Make College More Affordable

KENNETH P. LAVALLE June 12, 2014

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June 12, 2014 -The State Senate today passed five bills, sponsored by Senator Kenneth LaValle to make college more affordable for students and their families, while setting students up for success. These bills provide opportunities to help New York students thrive by increasing awards in the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to equal the cost per semester of SUNY and CUNY tuition, alleviating student loan debt, giving access to free community college to eligible students, and providing targeted work-training programs.

Senator LaValle said, “These bills go a long way in reaching the goals of accessible, quality, affordable education. We need to continue to pursue these types of measures today to better enable the students to compete in the world tomorrow.”

The college affordability bills approved by the Senate today include the following:

**Increasing TAP Awards** - The Senate passed legislation ([S7795](#)) that builds upon the \$34.2 million TAP increase the legislature included in the 2014-15 state budget. The measure increases the maximum TAP award from \$5,165 to \$6,470 beginning in fall 2015. In addition, the bill increases the maximum income eligibility for TAP from \$80,000 to \$100,000 to include more middle class families and students.

**Helping Students Pay Off Student Loan Debt** - The Senate approved legislation ([S7791](#)), that would help students pay off large student debts. The bill would enable eligible students to convert up to \$35,000 in private student loan debt into a low-interest loan to be managed by the state. Students would be able to pay off the loan based on their annual income and

ability to pay. The new program, called the New York Student Affordable Refinancing for Tomorrow (New START) Program, would make it easier for students to pay off student loan debt, which has surpassed credit card debt as the number one source of debt in the nation.

**Free Community College** – The Senate passed a bill ([S7793](#)) to guarantee access to a free community college education for eligible students. This bill requires the state's Higher Education Services Corporation to reimburse students for the cost of attending a community college if they meet eligibility requirements related to academic success and financial aid eligibility.

In addition, the Senate passed the following bills by Senator LaValle today that would:

- > Create a pilot program that includes reduced-cost accelerated baccalaureate degrees at SUNY institutions. These degree programs would be completed within three years and is capped at a total tuition cost of \$12,000 for the 2016-2017 academic year ([S7792](#));

- > Establish a grant-funded program geared at retraining and employing unemployed people. This legislation ([S7794](#)) awards a \$500,000 grant to community colleges to develop or improve existing workforce development programs. It would provide proper training required for job placement in businesses and industries within an eligible college's region that is lacking the necessary workforce, is seeking employees with new skills, or where job growth is anticipated in the near future.

The bills were transmitted to the Assembly for consideration.

