



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Senator Andrew Lanza & Assemblyman Michael Cusick Announce Final Budget Agreement Includes Vzn Toll Discount Program

ANDREW J LANZA March 30, 2015

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Senator Andrew Lanza and Assemblyman Michael Cusick today announced that the final budget agreement includes \$10.3 million for continued toll relief for Staten Island residents using the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. The resident discount rate will remain \$5.50 per trip.

Last year, the Senate and Assembly each included \$3.5 million and the Governor added \$7 million for a total of \$14 million in funding to provide relief to Staten Islanders using the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. The historic agreement reduced tolls for Staten Islanders enrolled in the E-ZPass resident discount program to \$5.50 for each tolled crossing -- a significant discount from the previous rates which were \$6.36 for residents crossing one or two times per month, \$6.00 for three or more crossings per month and \$16 for those not enrolled in E-ZPass. Additionally, a 20 percent toll discount was secured for commercial

vehicles using the bridge in either direction.

The 2014-2015 budget agreement for this plan stipulated that the budget lines had to be renewed annually. This year's Executive budget proposes that the Verrazano Narrows Bridge Rebate Program may only continue if 50 percent of the funding for the program is made available from the legislature. Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Cusick secured that funding in their respective houses.

Senator Lanza said, "Assemblyman Cusick and I made a commitment to the people of Staten Island that we would fight for the continuance of the historic Verrazano-Narrows Bridge toll relief program which is not only a matter of economics but fairness for the people of Staten Island, and we are happy to report that the funding has been secured in the final budget agreement."

Assemblyman Cusick said, "This discount program is crucial to Staten Island residents and businesses as the Verrazano bridge toll goes up almost every year. While negotiating this program with Senator Lanza and Governor Cuomo last year, we took into consideration the fact that the tolls would be increased. The money added in this year's budget will continue this toll relief for Staten Island residents. I want to thank Speaker Carl Heastie for being an integral part of these negotiations. He understood how crucial this is for Staten Island and he has been a strong supporter throughout this budget process."

Senator Savino said, "For the second year, working together, the Staten Island delegation was able to deliver real toll relief for our constituents. Thank you to Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Cusick for leading this fight."

"When the MTA once again egregiously instituted a toll hike in March it became incumbent upon Senator Savino, Assemblyman Cusick and myself to secure even more funding in this year's budget in order to offset this new toll hike," said Lanza. "By securing this money in the budget, we have successfully beat back the MTA toll hike and kept in place the \$5.50 toll for Staten Islanders."

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