



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

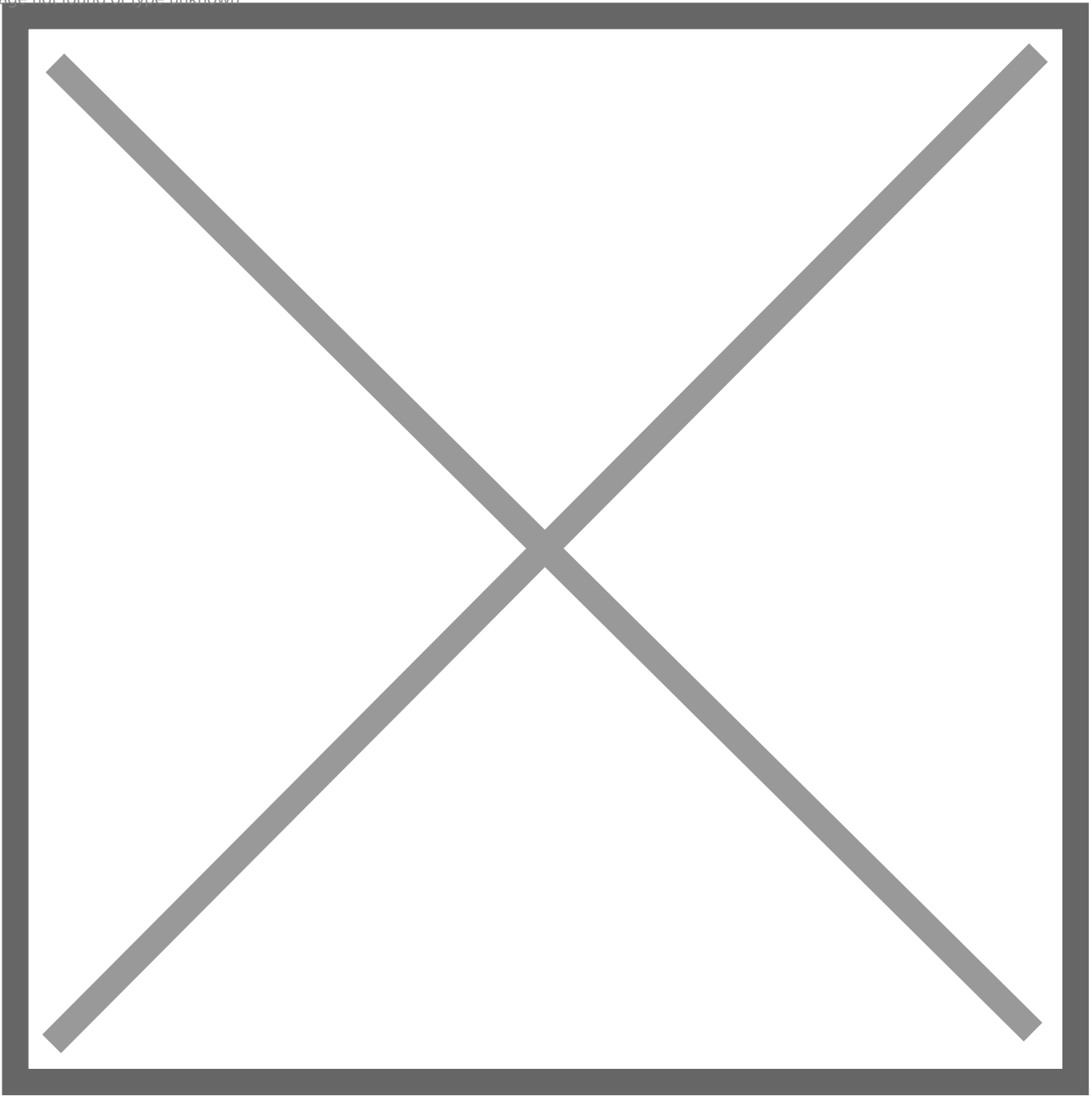
Susan Serino

## Freshman Senator Delivers

SUE SERINO March 31, 2015

| ISSUE: **AGING, EDUCATION, ENERGY, HEALTH, LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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## **FRESHMAN SENATOR DELIVERS**

### *Senator Serino's Statement on the New State Budget 2015-16*

ALBANY, NY— Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) proudly announced today that the new State Budget for 2015-16 includes major wins for residents of the 41<sup>st</sup> Senate District. The

new budget's emphasis on cutting spending and creating real, tangible jobs will provide a much needed boost to local economies and countless new opportunities for residents.

“In coming to Albany, I promised my constituents that I would fight to lower taxes, create tangible jobs, improve education and empower our seniors. This plan delivers on those promises and ensures that residents of the 41<sup>st</sup> District stand to benefit directly,” said Senator Serino. “It’s a new year here in Albany with plenty of new voices at the table, and that’s clear by what we’ve been able to accomplish with this budget.”

The statement comes on the heels of yesterday’s announcement that the new budget includes almost \$5 million dollars in critical funding that will go directly to Dutchess County to help hold the line on taxes and support critical mental health and criminal justice initiatives.

Additional highlights of this year’s budget include **a reduction in property taxes** that will provide real relief to homeowners, families, and seniors. It promises to deliver much **larger property tax freeze rebate checks** to hardworking taxpayers and includes record funding to the tune of **\$3.2 billion** for **STAR** and **Enhanced STAR**.

“Earlier this year, I sent a letter to senior constituents letting them know that they may be eligible for Enhanced STAR and the positive response has been overwhelming,” said Senator Serino. “These programs work and they provide real benefits to hardworking taxpayers and to our seniors who are committed to living within their means on fixed incomes.”

The new State Budget also strikes a balance between providing relief for taxpayers and bolstering our education system by **increasing state school aid** by approximately **\$1.4 billion**. The budget goes a step further to invest in the success of our students by **eliminating over fifty percent of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)**—a disastrous measure that has cost our local schools over \$160 million since its 2010 implementation.

“If I’ve said it once, I’ve said it a million times, our kids our are future and making smart investments in their success needs to be the driving force behind our decision making process,” Serino said in commenting on the increased education funding. “This budget demonstrates our clear commitment to the kids.”

Students seeking **higher education** also stand to benefit directly from this year’s budget as it helps make college more affordable for students and their families by:

- increasing community college base aid by \$100, which represents a **\$20 million boost in state aid to SUNY and CUNY community colleges;**
- **increasing funding to TAP by \$45 million** over last year, helping increase access to higher education to thousands of middle-class New Yorkers;
- establishing a **new merit scholarship program with \$500 scholarships** being awarded to 5,000 eligible students.

In order to ensure that our next generation of students has access to opportunity and jobs, the enacted budget makes revitalizing our economy a priority by **investing in capital projects** across New York and **providing \$1.5 billion** in funding **specifically for Upstate revitalization.**

Further, the budget provides for money and initiatives aimed at connecting and training workers to available jobs including **\$5 million** for the **Next Generation Job Linkage Program**, a **SUNY /CUNY Workforce Development Initiative**, and **\$7.6 million** for the **Workforce Development Institute.**

The budget also aims to reduce the cost of doing business in New York by **accelerating the phase-out of the onerous 18-a energy tax surcharge.**

As the Chair of the Senate Committee on Aging, Senator Serino was especially pleased to announce that the budget provided **unprecedented funding for services to our state's seniors** saying: "As the Chair, I made it my priority during these budget negotiations to not only listen to the needs of seniors, but to really hear them. I am confident that this new State budget delivers for our seniors by investing in programs that will empower them to live out their lives right here in New York."

Senator Serino was also sure to note the increase in dedicated Lyme funding saying, "As Chair of the Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, I am especially proud to announce that this year's budget provides an unprecedented **\$600,000 to combat Lyme Disease**. I promised to be relentless in the fight to eradicate Lyme and this allocation speaks directly to our commitment to that critical cause."

Senator Serino concluded saying, "This budget sets us on a path to ensure that New York becomes a place where people want to live, not one they want leave."

The complete passage of the new 2015-16 State Budget wrapped up late Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>—just ahead of the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

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