



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Senator Sanders Slams Budget - No Minimum Wage Increase, No Dream Act, Weak Ethics Reform, Tax Breaks for the Wealthy

JAMES SANDERS JR. April 1, 2015



Today State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale) denounced the Governor and Senate Republicans proposed budget, which is still in the final stages of negotiations, for numerous shortfalls including failing to raise the minimum wage, providing tax breaks to the wealthy, closing the door on the DREAM Act, not implementing paid family leave, and weak ethics reform.

With hours ticking away until the final budget is passed Senator Sanders continues to fight for the constituents of his district, lambasting his Republican colleagues on the senate floor for the inequities outlined in the budget, which neglects the needs of middle class and working class people. He also condemned the partisan negotiations process, which left out Senate Democratic Conference leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins from the budget talks.

“I must denounce the lack of transparency and the anti-democratic method in which this budget was created,” Sanders

said. "I certainly cannot vote for such a budget and I urge my colleagues to do likewise."

A perfect example of the misguided priorities found in the budget is in the Tax & Revenue Bill that includes the elimination of the sales tax on luxury yachts costing more than \$230,000. It also gives tax breaks to those buying personal aircraft. Senator Sanders pointed out that this type of trickle down economics doesn't work and that a better way to stimulate the economy would be through home building and construction.

"I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to go to my hardworking community of tax payers - middle class and working class people - and explain to them that we could not raise the minimum wage, but we can give tax payer money so that the rich can get a larger plane or a larger yacht," Senator Sanders said. "I tried to find the yacht owners association in my district. I was unable to find that group. So, I looked to see how many jet owners I had in my district, but unfortunately I came up short there also."

Passing a meaningful minimum wage increase with indexing would have helped lift over 1.1 million state residents out of poverty, allowing them to become independent providers for themselves and their families while spurring local economic growth via their increased purchasing power.

In the area of education, the state is potentially losing thousands of intelligent and motivated members of the workforce by failing to pass the DREAM Act. These students, though undocumented, deserve a chance at success and a path to citizenship. By giving these young people the opportunities they need to succeed, we are helping to build a stronger New York.

Another way the budget has fallen short in terms of helping our young people is through its failure to include legislation that would "Raise the Age" of criminal responsibility. New York continues to be the only state other than North Carolina that prosecutes all youth as adults when they turn 16 years old.

"While we have a responsibility to be tough on crime, but we also have a responsibility to rehabilitate youth who have made poor choices and set them back on the right path," Sanders said. "By housing offenders who are as young as 16 with adult inmates, we are potentially increasing their recidivism rate while decreasing their chance to re-enter society successfully. A felony blot can brand a person as criminal for life, decreasing job opportunities and chances at success."

With thousands of working-class families and single parents residing in his district, Senator Sanders knows firsthand how important it is to ensure that these residents have adequate paid family leave, another important initiative that was not included in the 2015-2016 budget proposal.

"These people are the backbone of our community and they deserve to have time off from work to handle medical emergencies, if they are having a baby, or need to take care of a sick relative. It's common sense," Sanders said. "Punishing dedicated workers by penalizing them financially because they took time off to take care of their own health or that of a sick loved one is cruel, and bad for the state economy".

The Senate Democratic Conference has long championed strong ethics reforms, but many of these measures have been excluded from the budget, including closing the LLC loophole; ending taxpayer funded reimbursements for legislators' legal defenses; reforming campaign finance laws and illuminating how donors contribute to campaigns and limiting how much can be donated to candidates for office; and ending taxpayer funded reimbursements for legislators' legal defenses.

The fight is not over yet and Senator Sanders will continue to be vehement in his opposition to this unfair and unacceptable budget, which leaves so many important initiatives unaccomplished

“New Yorkers deserve better than this,” Senator Sanders said. “They deserve more than partisan politics. When it comes to this budget, we all need to own it. We all need to get up there and wrestle and say that this is the best we can do for the people of New York. This is something that all of us have contributed to, and we need to be able to say this is the best we can do.”