



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders State Budget Wrap-up - Wins, Losses and Exclusions

JAMES SANDERS JR. April 1, 2015



(Albany, NY – March 31, 2015) State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) and his colleagues worked late into the night passing a state budget which proved to have more wins for the governor and Republican majority than for Democrats and working class people. Although disappointed with the final outcome, Senator Sanders will continue to work to ensure that all of the common sense proposals not included in this year's state budget are acted upon during the remainder of the 2015 legislative session.

"Sometimes, the struggle demands that you speak truth to those in power although you won't win in the short-term," Sanders said. "We Senate Democrats found ourselves lacking the vote to make a difference in the state budget. We have fought magnificently, but we ran out of road. I'd apologize to the worthy folk who were robbed, but the apology is not mine to give. To the working people of New York, your sons and daughters have fought well but total victory was not in our grasp. Considering what we had to work with, we did well."

During yesterday's session, Senator Sanders noted how the budget was a representation of what the state, as a whole, represents, and asserted that some of priorities being put forward, were disturbing such as favoring tax breaks on luxury items like yachts and private planes, while casting aside the DREAM Act, which could have helped thousands of students continue their education while creating a pathway to citizenship, and failing to raise the minimum wage, which could have lifted 1.1 million New Yorkers out of poverty.

"We have taken some amazing turns while I have been here." Sanders said. "We went from the rising tide of the DREAM Act to becoming the rising tide that lifts all yachts."

Senator Sanders stated that raising the minimum wage is one of the best ways to stimulate the economy because low income earners would spend that extra money on food and immediate necessities rather than storing it in hedge funds or using it to buy luxury items. "Instead of an economy that trickles down, how about one that bubbles up?" Sanders proposed.

He continued, "Although there are many good and bad things in this budget, perhaps the most glaring, the most costly, the most horrible omission that we have committed, has been our failure to raise the minimum wage. Perhaps we have gotten a little too far away from the average man and woman on the street, trying to make ends meet and live on the minimum wage. Perhaps we have forgotten, or perhaps we have never known, what it's like to try to feed a family on the minimum wage – a wage that has not increased in many years."

Senator Sanders concluded, "May we in the Empire State return to our mission, return to helping people pull themselves up by their bootstraps, instead of stepping on their bootstraps, as we rush to cater to the well heeled."

Below are some key budget wins, losses and exclusions.

Wins

- The 2015-2016 State Budget includes a \$1.6 billion spending increase for education, with \$1.33 billion earmarked for **school aid**.
- Approved the creation of a **Basic Health Program**, which will provide insurance for New Yorkers whose incomes are between 138% and 200% of the federal poverty level.

- The **Education Investment Tax Credit** (EITC), which would have allowed the wealthiest among us to significantly reduce their tax liability by funneling money to private and religious schools was **dropped from the budget**.

Losses

- **Ethics reforms** passed in the budget are not nearly strong enough to really clean up Albany and exclude: closing the LLC loophole, ending taxpayer funded reimbursements for legislators' legal defenses; reforming campaign finance laws and shedding light on 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 budget provided yet another **extension of the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act** (DERA) Compliance Deadline, which has been extended in five consecutive budgets. This legislation allows New York's most egregiously polluting vehicles to remain on the road rather than requiring more environmentally-friendly vehicles to replace them.

Missing

- The **DREAM Act**, which could have helped thousands of students continue their education while creating a pathway to citizenship was pushed out of the budget process.

- The State Budget also failed to increase the state's **minimum wage** which would have helped over 1.1 million struggling New Yorkers lift themselves out of poverty.
- Young families and new parents in New York State will be forced to choose between caring for their children and immediately returning to work because the state budget did not implement **paid family leave**.
- Young adults throughout New York State will continue to be treated like hardened criminals and be denied access to the rehabilitation services that could help them better contribute to society because the state budget did not **raise the age of criminal responsibility**.
- Completely neglected from the final budget was any funding or legislation to **reform the criminal justice system**.
- The budget does not provide meaningful **property tax relief** for hard working people, families and businesses.
- The budget does not include provisions to provide **protections for farmer workers** in New York State, including rest days, overtime pay or disability insurance, all of which are provided to other laborers in New York State.