



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

New Budget: More Property Tax Relief, Investments in Infrastructure, Schools

MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER April 22, 2015

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Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

By: Michael H. Ranzenhofer

For the fifth straight year, the 2015-16 State Budget keeps within a two-percent spending cap, rejects tax increases and turns a \$10 billion deficit into a surplus within those five years.

The new budget reflects my commitment to spending restraint, and the only way to reduce the tax burden is to control spending. In doing so, I have been able to push for more property tax relief, and this year's budget builds upon this progress.

The final budget designates a record amount of funding, \$3.2 billion, to fully fund STAR and Enhanced STAR, two outstanding programs delivering major tax relief to middle-class families and seniors every year. Additionally, the State Budget will deliver bigger property tax rebate checks in the mail to millions of homeowners for a second consecutive year.

A major boost in state education aid for our local school districts will also help to reduce pressure at the local level for property tax increases. The new budget provides approximately \$1.4 billion in school aid increases and significantly reduces the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) by nearly 60 percent.

Enacted in 2010 by New York City Democrats, the GEA budget cuts have unfairly taken away millions of dollars in funding for school districts to plug deficits and pay for runaway spending. In this year's budget alone, \$603 million in GEA cuts are restored. I will continue to work towards the full elimination of the GEA once and for all.

Bigger rebate checks, record STAR funding and a boost in funding for our schools will help to ensure that homeowners keep more of their dollars. Another boost in funding, for our local infrastructure, will bring more dollars back to Western New York, too.

Towns, villages and cities all across Erie County will receive more funding than ever before to support the repair and maintenance of our local highways, roads and bridges. The final budget maintains a record level of funding as part of the CHIPS program for a third consecutive year, while allocating extra dollars for a second time to address potholes and road surface damage from the harsh winter.

In addition to these initiatives, the State Budget designates \$7.2 billion in capital funds over two years for the State Department of Transportation to support state-of-the-art infrastructure and an additional \$1 billion in funds to repair and replace roads and bridges.

For far too long, New York's crumbling infrastructure has been put on the back burner. The new budget makes a substantial down payment on addressing this issue.

Overall, the new State Budget for 2015-16 reflects my commitment to a brighter future for Western New York by delivering more property tax relief, increasing funding for schools and making strategic investments.

Senator Ranzenhofer's monthly column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on April 15th.