



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS July 9, 2015

| ISSUE: **LEGISLATURE**

### Ye Ol' Grindstone

At this time of year I think back to the last few weeks of school as they wound down to just days and those days finally turned into minutes. We'd watch that clock on the wall as it ticked off the moments until summer and truth be told, it seemed impossible to concentrate on getting any work done. As kids, we were absolutely certain this time was meant to be like a landing strip, with schoolwork gently tapering off to ease us gracefully into the joys summer...And if you had teachers like mine, you were rudely awakened.

Looking back, I'm thankful to those teachers who kept us working right up until the end. I guess they knew what psychologists say: that delayed gratification is one of the surest signs of maturity. Or maybe they just got a kick out of "torturing" us, who knows? In any case, as a State Senator, their lessons on keeping your nose to the grindstone have come in very handy, especially this year.

Case in point was this last week of session in Albany, where we accomplished an enormous amount, delivering a whole caboodle of much-needed actions that keep New York's comeback going strong (Sorry, but how often do I have the opportunity to use "caboodle" in a sentence?). When the dust settles around the hundreds of ideological debates

that confront lawmakers, our job is to keep New York's comeback going strong and that means continuing our efforts to make life here more affordable. We haven't lost sight of this fact as it ultimately binds all of us, no matter your politics or background.

In that light we passed legislation that brings \$3.1 billion in new tax relief to home owners, extends the hugely successful property tax cap to deliver additional savings and create new jobs, increases education aid and even improves access to affordable housing. And unlike our counterparts in Washington, we did it through compromise and consensus building, with both parties in the Senate and Assembly passing the measures and Governor Cuomo signing them into law.

As a result, STAR-eligible homeowners throughout the state will receive \$3.1 billion in new property tax rebates over the next four years, starting in 2016. When the new rebates are combined with the existing tax freeze check planned for next year, a total of \$900 million in property tax relief checks will be sent – an average of approximately \$350 per eligible homeowner statewide. In 2019-2020, this new tax relief will be fully phased in and a total of \$1.3 billion will be issued to taxpayers. Our legislation also continues the highly-effective property tax cap which has already saved taxpayers \$7.6 billion over the past four years. It was set to expire in 2016-2017 but will now continue on through 2020, bringing stability and certainty to taxpayers and businesses.

Understanding that every dollar we send to local communities from the State is one less dollar that has to be raised through property taxes, we increased state aid to our local schools by \$1.4 billion in this year's budget for a total of \$23.5 billion in pre-K through 12 school aid statewide – both all time highs.

Keep in mind, this increase in the state's investment in local schools and providing property tax rebates was done while the state, for the fifth year in a row, kept state spending

increases to less than 2% and again, didn't raise a single tax or fee. Simply put, the state continues to do more with less and is maintaining the same fiscal restraint we've asked of our local governments.

We've made progress to be sure, but I no sooner returned to my district office than I found a new pile of issues and initiatives on my desk. And that's fine. I'll just think back to those teachers urging me to look at my work and not the clock, saying, "We're not done, 'til we're done."