



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terry Gipson

## Work on behalf of those with disabilities

TERRY GIPSON March 17, 2014

This weekend, I participated in the 20th Annual Putnam County Legislative Forum for People with Disabilities. Here is an overview of what I have been working on, and some of the issues we discussed.

- Developmental Disabilities Issues
  - Fought to successfully restore \$90 million in funding for OPWDD.
  - Support re-investment of additional savings through re-estimation of the value of bed closures into the development of community-based services for mental health services.
  - Support a 2% Cost of Living Adjustment being included in this year's budget. Human service workers haven't received a COLA in six years.
  
- Transition Planning
  - Support increased funding for Independent Living Centers which are vital to community based advocacy and service organizations that serve as a safety net to ensure persons with disabilities have access to the services and support they need to live independently in their own communities.
  
- Early Intervention/Preschool
  - Co-sponsored legislation to make sure that EI providers are paid on a timely basis. (S6002 and S6008)
  - Introduced legislation that would have the State fully fund the cost of Early Intervention. Would save localities approximately \$100 million annually to put towards other services while ensuring these vital EI programs continue. (S6001)
  
- Special Education Programs
  - Continue to advocate for the "853" schools in SD-41 calling for increased funding that includes tuition indexing language for 853 and Special Act Schools.
  - Secured a 3% increase in funding for 853 school providers in the 2013-14 budget. 853 schools had been working under a reimbursement freeze for the previous four years.
  
- Senior/Aging Issues

- o Introduced Municipal Property Tax Deferment Bill (S5409) to give more flexibility to localities and seniors to work together to keep seniors in their homes.
  
- Residential Development/Housing
  - o Support increased funding for Community Service for the Elderly Program (CSE), which provides non-medical community-based services to frail, low-income seniors to help them remain in their homes.
  
- Medical Benefits and Entitlements
  - o Support Governor Cuomo’s Heat and Eat Program
    - § Protects SNAP benefits for nearly 300,000 homes in Dutchess and Putnam County from the recent cuts to the SNAP program in the recently passed federal “Farm Bill.”
  
- Veterans’ Issues
  - o Created Dutchess and Putnam Veterans Advisory Committee
  - o Hosted Veterans and Families Fair
    - § Featured over 50 service providers and exhibitors that offer services such as healthcare, housing, employment, education, business support and much more.
    - § Established 41<sup>st</sup> Senate District Veterans Hall of Fame
  - o Voted to establish Veteran Peer to Peer Program in Putnam County within the 2013-2014 Enacted Budget.
  - o Voted to establish the Hire a Veteran Tax Credit in the 2013-2014 Enacted Budget. For post-9/11 veterans. 10% of gross wages paid to a veteran, up to \$5,000. 15% of gross wages, up to \$15,000 if it’s a disabled veteran.
  - o Co-sponsored the “Hire a Hero” legislation, S.2803-B, which would amend the executive law, in relation to state contract preference for service-disabled veteran small businesses.