



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## Senator Rivera Speaks on the Senate's Passing of the 2016 - 2017 Budget

GUSTAVO RIVERA April 1, 2016

(*Albany, NY*) - Senator Gustavo Rivera (D-Bronx) joined his colleagues in the State Senate to vote on the 10 bills of the 2016-2017 Budget. Senator Rivera voted against one of the budget bills, specifically the Capital Projects bill (S. 6404-D).

### **2016-2017 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

"The greatest victory of this budget was preventing the shift of a substantial portion of New York State's financial responsibility in terms of Medicaid and the City University of New York (CUNY) to New York City. In addition, this year's budget took important steps in improving the lives of hard-working New Yorkers by raising our State's minimum wage and implementing paid family leave.

However, this year's budget has left out key priorities New York desperately needs. I continue to be disappointed by the lack of urgency demonstrated by this Legislature to implement necessary ethics reform, such as campaign finance reform, that will help restore the trust of New Yorkers in our government. At the same time, the budget once again omitted common sense proposals such as Raise The Age and the appointment of a Special Prosecutor to investigate cases of police misconduct that led to the death of a civilian.

While this year's budget represents an auspicious step forward for our State on a number of issues, the budget process itself has left much to be desired. Not only was our leader, Senator Stewart-Cousins, not included in the budget negotiations, but the entire Senate Democratic Conference was only able to analyze the legislative language of several of the budget bills in an absurd short span of time. The voices of the 8 million New Yorkers, who are collectively represented by the Senate Democrats, deserve a budget process that is transparent, inclusive and more importantly, democratic."

### **THE BRONX**

"As always, my top priority during the budget process is the Bronx. It is my responsibility to find ways to enact policies and deliver resources for the communities I represent that will help them thrive.

After a long and exhaustive fight, this year's budget will raise our State's minimum wage continuously until reaching \$15 per hour by the end of 2018. In a district such as the one that I represent, where the median income is \$27,000 for a family of four, raising our minimum wage will give many families another tool to help break the cycle of poverty. Furthermore, working New Yorkers will now be eligible to take up to 12 weeks of paid family leave by the year 2019. These two measures will greatly benefit workers in the Bronx and across the State. Bronxites living on a minimum wage will be better able to provide for their families and all workers will be able to take off time from work to care for a family member without having to worry about losing their job.

Additionally, it is encouraging that this budget has allocated \$600,000 for the SNUG program

at the Jacobi Medical Center in order to continue its efforts to reduce gun violence in our neighborhoods. It is my goal to bring this model to a hospital in our district."

## **HEALTH**

"As the Ranker of the Senate Health Committee, I am very pleased that this year's budget took various steps towards ensuring that New Yorkers have access to quality and affordable healthcare. I'm extremely relieved that the State did not burden New York City with nearly \$700 million in Medicaid costs over the next two years. This funding shift would have been disastrous for the City and would have taken away funding from crucial social programs.

I am very glad that the budget included \$195 million for the transformation of healthcare services, with 30 percent going to community-based health care providers across the State. Additionally, we allocated \$9.65 million in funding for the Doctors Across New York Program to help train and place doctors in underserved communities like the Bronx.

Lastly, as a vocal advocate for ending AIDS as an epidemic by 2020, I find it discouraging that the budget did not allocate anywhere close to the \$70 million needed to ensure we fulfill the goals set by the Ending AIDS Epidemic Blueprint. Instead, the budget only appropriated a meager \$10 million towards this effort."

## **EDUCATION**

"I'm elated that we did not jeopardize the academic future of thousands of students by preventing the shift of \$485 million in CUNY costs from the State to New York City. We were also able to maintain CUNY and SUNY affordable for in state students by freezing their

tuition, providing students with a much needed relief after years of hikes. However, the State did not live up to its commitment to allocate \$240 million towards fulfilling the collective bargaining agreement for CUNY professors and staff who have been working without a contract for too many years.

While it is encouraging that this budget has included \$340 million towards statewide universal full-day pre-kindergarten and \$175 million in funding to transform struggling schools into community schools, it has once again fallen short in providing adequate funding for our public schools. This year's budget once again failed to meet its responsibility to our public schools under the Campaign for Fiscal Equity settlement, while not removing last year's measure to tie teacher evaluations to the funding a school receives. Disgracefully, we once again denied our immigrant youth an affordable higher education by omitting the Dream Act."

This is a budget that all New Yorkers can be proud of, as it contains solid measures that will benefit millions all across our State. However, the lack of transparency during the process of putting it together is the absolute opposite of the way a democracy should work. We need to make a conscious decision to improve it so that the voices of all New Yorkers are properly heard.

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Senator Rivera's session remarks on the Health and Mental Hygiene budget bill S.6407C:

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