



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Democrats Propose Progressive Budget Prioritizing Working Class New Yorkers

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS March 15, 2017

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Albany, NY - Today, the Senate Democratic Conference released its priorities for the 2016-2017 State Budget. These requests include fiscal proposals as well as policy initiatives that will protect New Yorkers from harmful federal cuts while growing our economy across New York State. The progressive proposals by Democratic Conference are those that would have been put forth had Democrats united and been given a rightful Majority, but now face opposition from the Republican Majority Coalition.

“The State Budget should be more than a fiscal document, it is also an opportunity for us to enact real reforms and protections against Donald Trump’s agenda,” Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “New Yorkers deserve better than a budget full of half-measures, fake reforms, and inadequate action on the issues facing our communities. The Senate Democratic proposals will provide New Yorkers with the progressive action and economic development they deserve.”

The Senate Democratic Conference budget proposals were generated following the conclusion of the Joint Legislative Budget Hearings on the Executive Budget and will address the concerns and priorities of the stakeholders who testified at these hearings. In a Budget Letter sent to Majority Leader John Flanagan, the Senate Democratic Conference

expressed strong concerns about the Executive's proposal that would allow the Director of Budget and State Commissioners to make budgetary decisions without the Legislature. While understanding the Executive's responsibility to ensure a budget is fiscally sound, the Conference stressed the importance of ensuring that the constitutional limits on the Executive's powers are not exceeded.

Senate Democratic Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris said, "Senate Democrats' budget proposal addresses the needs of working families, fosters economic growth and ensures expected federal policies do not harm our communities. New York should be a leader in the fight against efforts from Washington to dismantle our state's progressive agenda, and our proposal does just that."

Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Liz Krueger said, "The Senate Democrats are offering a set of progressive policy initiatives that would make New York state a leader in ensuring access to healthcare, education, and housing, addressing inequities in our criminal justice system, and creating a more responsive and transparent government. These proposals should be part of the budget discussion with the Governor. I urge my Senate and Assembly colleagues in all conferences to include us in the budget process so all New Yorkers have the seat at the table that they deserve."

Senate Democratic Policy Group Chair Daniel Squadron said, "From more just criminal justice laws, to ethics reforms and protecting funding for seniors and public housing, the Democratic Conference is putting forward priorities that matter to New Yorkers. With the current federal climate, recommitting to these important priorities is as important as ever. Democratic values like these, with a Democratic Assembly and Governor, could happen with a Democratic Senate. Thank you to Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senator Krueger, and my colleagues in the Democratic Conference."

The Senate Democratic Conference's policy priorities include:

- Raising the age of criminal responsibility. Passing strong ethics reforms to earn the public's trust. Making college affordable for New York families. Restoring funding for elementary and secondary schools so New York's children can reach their full potential.

The Senate Democratic Conference's fiscal priorities include:

- Increased funding for homeless services and affordable housing; create a contingency reserve fund to address the impact of federal cuts. Expanding transportation network companies to Upstate New York with clear protections for employees. Rejecting proposed Title XX changes that would cut aid to senior centers. Ensuring that the MTA receives full funding from owed revenues sources without harmful budgetary sweeps.

The Senate Democratic Conference's proposals grow the state economy, improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers and re-earn the public's trust in State government. To review the Senate Democratic Conference's budget priorities letter, please visit:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/341854282/Senate-Democratic-Conference-s-Budget-Letter>

Hector Figueroa, President of SEIU local 32BJ, said, "We applaud the Senate Democrats for standing up for a more progressive budget that gets to the heart of what New Yorkers really need, including worker protections and good jobs, affordable housing, quality public education and access to quality health care. They are priorities for working families and should be the priorities in Albany as well."

Mario Cilento, President of the New York State AFL-CIO, said, "We thank the Senate Democratic Conference for making Buy American legislation a top priority. Our hard-earned tax dollars, as well as our jobs, should not be sent overseas, particularly when we have the

best skilled workers in the world ready to fill those positions. With Buy American, we will be creating good manufacturing jobs and strengthening local economies, including right here at home in New York.”

Bill Lipton, Director of NY State Working Families Party, said, “State elected leaders are our first line of defense in the resistance against Trump. New Yorkers are looking to Albany to enact policies and a budget that will protect New Yorkers against Trump’s attacks and build a state that works for all of us. The policies and budget priorities laid out by Senate Democrats show us what could be possible if the State Senate were to put working families first.”

Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education, said, “The Senate Democrats have made it clear they are committed to educating every student regardless of race, income or zip code. Their commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid, which greatly benefits our students and schools, is the type of progressive leadership New York needs. If Senate Republican leadership continues to pay lip service to our schools while blocking full funding of Foundation Aid, it is our children throughout the state will suffer the consequences. There are now enough Senate Republicans who publicly state that they support Foundation Aid that they could join with the Democrats and deliver for our students, but to do so they must put public school pupils before partisan politics.”

Blair Horner, Executive Director of NYPIRG, said, “NYPIRG applauds the efforts of the Senate Democratic Conference to demand accountability of the Cuomo Administration’s plans to hike electric utility rates by \$7.6 billion. This is ‘Sunshine Week’; state government officials must make policy decisions in an open and transparent manner.”

Javier H. Valdés, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York, said, “The Senate Democrats’ budget letter demonstrates a commitment to the needs and rights of working-

class communities across this state. On issues ranging from fully funding our public schools to standing up for workers' rights and ending wage theft to expanding higher education access through the DREAM Act, this letter responds to the critical needs of our communities. We strongly encourage Senate Majority Leader Flanagan and the rest of his conference to heed this letter and incorporate these important recommendations into the Senate's one-house budget proposal."

Claudia Perez, Member-Leader at Community Voices Heard, said, "The Senate Democrats budget provides protections and support for low-income and working New Yorkers at time when the federal government has made clear its commitment to walk away from these communities. From criminal justice reform, to increased funding for capital needs in public housing, and support for public education, the Democratic budget proposal will best address the needs of all New Yorkers."

Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director for Policy for the Coalition for the Homeless, said, "The Senate Democratic Conference is wisely supporting the release of much needed funds for supportive housing and affordable housing programs across New York. Supportive housing is one of the most cost-effective tools we have for combating homelessness and helping vulnerable New Yorkers get back on their feet, but promised financing for new supportive housing construction in New York has been delayed for more than a year. With record levels of homelessness, it is long past time for Albany leaders to fully fund the housing we desperately need."

Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director of the New York State League of Women Voters, said, "The LWVNYS supports the campaign finance reforms in the Senate Democratic budget proposal, we also strongly support voting reforms including early voting, expanded automatic voter registration as well as the comptroller reforms to the contracting process. These reforms taken together will restore trust in state government."

Claudia J. Hammar, President of the NYS Association of Health Care Providers, said, “The New York State Association of Health Care Providers (HCP) commends Senate Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the New York State Democratic Conference for advocating for fair and adequate reimbursement of New York’s home care providers and our dedicated workforce. HCP is grateful that Senator Stewart-Cousins and the Democratic Conference recognize the importance of ensuring that funding intended for reimbursement, recruitment, retention and training of home care workers is disbursed appropriately.”

Jonathan Westin, Director of New York Communities for Change, said, “As a community organization representing over 20,000 low and middle income people across NYC and Long Island, our members will be devastated by the federal cuts to housing, health care, and social services. New York must be a symbol of how states stand up to Trump. We support Democratic State Senate Minority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and the rest of the State Senate Democratic Conference in fighting for New York residents and pushing for restoring any cuts and increasing funds to NYCHA, fulfilling the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, and restoring cuts to our healthcare system.”

Jessica Azulay, Program Director with Alliance for a Green Economy, said, “We support the stand taken by the Senate Democratic Conference to delay the implementation of the \$7.6 billion nuclear subsidy, which will raise electricity rates for all New Yorkers to prop up a dirty and dangerous industry. It’s high time for our public agencies to review all our options and provide the public with alternatives to this bad deal.”

Andrea Bowen, Policy Analyst with United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), said, “As the long-time leader of the Campaign for Summer Jobs, United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) stands firmly behind the New York State Democratic Conference’s proposal to expand funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). SYEP provides thousands of youth with exposure to careers and higher education, as well as a critical first-job experience. Through

SYEP, youth develop the soft skills necessary to succeed in the workforce, as well as emerge as more engaged students during the school year. Yet, due to its popularity and limited funding, tens of thousands of youth across the state, including 6,000 outside of New York City, were turned away from the program in the summer of 2015; in 2016, just 61,000 out of 140,000 youth applicants were able to take part. It is clear that youth are eager for this opportunity and the Conference's proposed expansion will allow 5,000 additional youth to achieve their goals. UNH looks forward to working with the legislature and Governor to make this proposal a reality."

Jeremy Saunders, Co-Director of VOCAL-NY, said, "The budget amendments proposed by the Democratic conference do more than just represent good public policy, they place compassion and justice above politics. The policies laid out here confront head on the crisis of homelessness facing our state, where over 88,000 men, women and children sleep in shelters nightly. Tackling this problem is not just good politics, it is a basic act of decency."

Veronica Vanterpool, Executive Director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, said, "The Senate's budget proposal both protects and increases funding for New York's financially challenged transit systems while calling for an end to opaque capital program planning at the NYS Department of Transportation. This proposal shows that the Senate will not allow New York's transportation network to fall victim to funding cuts, underinvestment and inadequate public process."

Tristram S. Coffind, Board Chair for the New York State Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Coalition, said, "The New York State CDFI Coalition wholeheartedly supports the recommendation of the Senate Democratic Conference to include \$15 million in funding for the New York State CDFI Fund in its' budget request. New York's passage of legislation in 2007 to set up a State CDFI Fund modeled after the successful Treasury Department CDFI program was a milestone achievement, however the Fund to this point

has not received an appropriation, limiting our ability to serve our borrowers and efficiently leverage private investment to achieve maximum impact. CDFIs are making a difference each day for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who aspire to a better future for themselves and their families.”

Alex Beauchamp, Northeast Region Director of Food & Water Watch, said, “New York shouldn’t be wasting billions propping up aging, unsafe nuclear plants. From Long Island to Buffalo, New Yorkers won’t stand for this egregious waste of our money that Governor Cuomo planned in the shadows with little to no opportunity for public input. It’s time to abandon the nuclear bailout once and for all.”

Michael J. Castellana, President and CEO of SEFCU, said, “As a credit union that has facilities in underserved communities in Albany, Schenectady, Syracuse and Buffalo we have prioritized the needs of those on the fringe of the banking system. As a community-driven institution, one of our goals is to expand economic opportunities for all New Yorkers. Funding the New York CDFI Fund would allow SEFCU and other credit unions throughout the state to continue serving some of the most distressed, underbanked and underdeveloped communities in New York.”

William J. Mellin, President and CEO of the New York Credit Union Association, said, “Community Development Financial Institutions, including CDFI-certified credit unions, provide important credit, banking services and investment capital to low- and moderate-income communities throughout the state. New York’s credit unions—which are not-for-profit financial cooperatives—are uniquely positioned to serve these economically disadvantaged areas, and many already do. Appropriating funds for CDFIs will help credit unions carry out their social mission of putting people over profit, and more importantly, will provide more New Yorkers with critical access to financial services.”

Karen Scharff, Executive Director of Citizen Action of NY, said, “We applaud the Senate Democrats for standing up for ordinary New Yorkers from children to senior citizens. Their budget agenda sets the kind of priorities that will create an economy that works for all of us, not just the wealthy and well connected.”

Beth Finkel, AARP New York State Director, said “PULP has a long history of strong, well-researched advocacy on behalf of New York’s low-income utility consumers AARP strongly supports funding for PULP’s vital work.”