



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Numerous Senate Bills Given Final Passage This Week, Next Step: The Governor's Desk

ANDREW J. LANZA June 12, 2018

The New York State Senate today announced that final passage was given this week to seven important bills that will be sent to the Governor for review. If signed, the bills would assist victims of human trafficking; assist taxpaying homeowners affected by Superstorm Sandy; increase public awareness and help prevent infants from contracting a potentially deadly virus that causes deafness; study possible connections between Lyme or other tick-borne diseases and mental health; help farmers by protecting bees and other pollinators from habitat loss; honor 9/11 victims and their family members; and reimburse state funding to school districts in a timely manner.

### ***Bills given final passage:***

Helping Victims of Human Trafficking: Bill S7836, sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R-C-I, Staten Island), would help expand the availability of the Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC) to reach more victims across the state. HTICs were created to provide alternatives to incarceration for people arrested on prostitution charges, since many of the defendants were also victims of human trafficking. Currently, however, four of the six courts outside of New York City lack jurisdiction to see cases that originate outside of the local criminal courts where they are physically situated. This bill expands that jurisdiction so that

more victims would be eligible to receive crucial services that are appropriate for their individual situations, including counseling, job training, education, housing, and medical treatment, among others.

Reducing Tax Burdens for Homeowners affected by Hurricane Sandy: Bill S7339, sponsored by Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County), would extend the tax exemption for residential property owners in municipalities affected by Superstorm Sandy by two years to 2020. Five years after one of the most deadly and costly hurricanes on record struck, many New York homeowners continue to do extensive repairs and reconstruction so that they can remain in or return to their homes. This legislation would extend the tax exemption that provides a graduated tax increase over an eight-year period to eligible Superstorm Sandy victims in an effort to help communities recover.

Educating Parents and Testing for Cytomegalovirus in Newborns: Bill S2816, sponsored by Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau), would encourage testing newborns for Cytomegalovirus (CMV), raise public awareness for families, and help reduce transmission of the harmful CMV illness between toddlers and their parents. CMV is the most common congenital viral infection and the leading non-genetic cause of deafness in children. Although signs and symptoms of CMV are rarely noticeable in a majority of people, its effects can be devastating to babies in utero, with roughly 400 children that die from the ailment annually. This bill would also help educate parents to take simple preventative measures to against the virus and potentially screen their newborns when they show signs of a hearing impairment.

Studying the Impact of Tick-Borne Diseases and Blood-Borne Pathogens on Mental Health: Bill S7171A, sponsored by Senator Sue Serino (R-C-I, Hyde Park), would direct the state Department of Health and Office of Mental Health to conduct a study on the possible connection that Lyme and tick-borne diseases may have with mental illness. Recent research

has emerged that suggests that infectious diseases and blood-borne pathogens may play an important role in the development of neuropsychiatric conditions, mood disorders, and a variety of mental health conditions in infected patients. In a recent public hearing conducted by the Senate Majority Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, health experts noted that there were psychiatric symptoms related to these types of infections that could have long-term impacts on a patient's health and standard of living. Given the prevalence of these types of ailments in New York, it is imperative that the state approach this epidemic from a holistic perspective that accounts for the mental health consequences of these types of infections.

Protecting Pollinators and Farmers: Bill S6339A, sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie (R-C-I, Heuvelton), would make it state policy to encourage pollinator-friendly landscapes on solar farm sites. According to the State Pollinator Taskforce, New York is home to more than 450 pollinator species currently under threat from habitat loss and fragmentation, colony collapse disorder, parasites, exposure to toxins, and other stressors. Many of the state's leading agricultural crops rely heavily on pollination, and although many solar site owners claim that they are eco-friendly, this legislation would help ensure that statewide guidelines to be developed by the state Department of Agriculture and Markets include short-term and long-term minimum standards for biodiversity and land management practices. The bill would also promote greater pollinator protection without restricting farming practices for farms who do not make public claims regarding pollinator benefits.

Memorializing 9/11 Victims and Helping Send their Family Members to College: Bill S6072B, sponsored by Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson), would commemorate victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks by authorizing the issuance of distinctive license plates, and direct a part of the sales proceeds to the World Trade Center Memorial Scholarship fund.

Reimbursing State Funding to Districts in a Timely Manner: Bill S6551, sponsored by Senator Chris Jacobs (R-C-I, 60th District), would eliminate the year-long delay in state school aid payments to school districts outside New York City that get reimbursed for charter expenses. Currently, school districts do not get reimbursed for charter school tuition until the following school year. This bill would speed up those payments and give school districts more flexibility to handle operating costs.