



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Senate and Assembly Majorities Announce Passage of Major Legislative Package Combating COVID-19 and Protecting New Yorkers

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY May 29, 2020

| ISSUE: [CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19](#)

# Senate and Assembly Majorities Announce Passage of Major Legislative Package Combating COVID-19 and Protecting New Yorkers

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie today announced the Legislature has passed a major legislative package to help support New Yorkers during the current COVID-19 pandemic, and help the state be prepared for future emergencies. The legislation focuses on protecting New Yorkers' rights, helping them stay in their homes, providing economic relief for struggling workers and businesses, strengthening the health care system and maintaining critical services.

"The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted nearly every aspect of our daily lives. This is a time for decisive government action to help the millions of struggling New Yorkers trying to endure this crisis," Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins said. "The bills advanced through

the Senate and Assembly will help families trying to make ends meet, stay in their homes, and have some stability during this extraordinary time. I thank my partner in legislative leadership, Speaker Carl Heastie, and my Senate Democratic Majority colleagues for advancing these bills to help New Yorkers in need and for their tireless efforts to serve their constituents and New York State.”

“Over the last several weeks, my colleagues and I in the Assembly Majority have been responding to the urgent needs of our communities and learning firsthand about the many challenges New Yorkers are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Speaker Heastie. “This week, we worked with our partners in the State Senate to protect the rights and health of New Yorkers, help struggling homeowners and renters, and support our small businesses and work force. I thank my colleagues in the Assembly Majority, for their continued commitment to the communities they serve, as well as my friend and counterpart in the Senate, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins.”

## **Protecting New Yorkers’ Rights**

The Senate and Assembly Majorities are committed to protecting New Yorkers' rights. Legislation passed this week will continue to protect the rights of New Yorkers during this pandemic. The bills passed by the Senate and Assembly include:

- **S.7082, Hoylman/ A.9036**, Rosenthal: This legislation will extend the period of time to file civil claims under the Child Victims Act by one year.
- **S.8189, Hoylman/ A.10270**, Rozic: This legislation will update New York’s anti-price gouging law to include medical supplies and services as well as goods and services used to promote

public health.

- **S.8130D, Myrie / A.10516A**, Simotas: This legislation will enable New Yorkers to apply for absentee ballots through an electronic application. This would ensure more New Yorkers are able to vote and participate in the democratic process despite the ongoing pandemic.
- **S.8397A, Savino / A.10326A**, Reyes: This legislation will prohibit health care employers from retaliating against health care workers speaking out about workplace safety or health violations including to the news media or on social media.
- **S.8415, Bailey / A.10446A**, Quart: This legislation will repeal an archaic prohibition on the wearing of costumes and masks in public, which would advance the public effort to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

## **Helping Struggling Renters and Homeowners**

Affordable housing was a priority for the Senate and Assembly Majorities long before the arrival of COVID-19. Now, millions of New Yorkers are struggling to make rent or mortgage payments as a result of the pandemic and economic crisis. Included in this legislative package are bills that would address these concerns and help New Yorkers stay in their homes. The bills passed by the Senate and Assembly include:

- **S.8419, Kavanagh / A.10522**, Cymbrowitz: This legislation will enact the “Emergency Rent Relief Act of 2020” to establish an interim residential rent relief program for low-income tenants. The program will issue a subsidy for tenants who were rent burdened prior to the COVID-19 pandemic – or are paying more than 30 percent of their income toward rent – and are now experiencing an even greater rent burden due to a loss of income.

- **S.8192B, Hoylman / A.10290B**, Dinowitz: This legislation will prohibit the eviction for nonpayment of rent of residential tenants who have suffered financial hardship and were in arrears on rent while New York on PAUSE imposed restrictions in their county. The tenant would remain liable for the rent owed, but this legislation will ensure New Yorkers are not made homeless due to these extraordinary circumstances.
- **S.8243C, Kavanagh / A.10351B**, Rozic: This bill will require New York State regulated banking institutions to grant 180 days of mortgage forbearance, with the option for an additional 180 days, on a residential mortgage on their primary residence to any mortgagor who can demonstrate financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **S.8138B, Martinez/ A.10252A**, Stern: This legislation will permit municipalities to defer certain property taxes during the COVID-19 State of Emergency and will also permit installment payments to be determined by the local legislative body. No additional interest or penalties will accrue during such deferment.
- **S.8122B, Comrie / A.10241A**, Hyndman: This legislation will extend the application and renewal deadline to file for real property tax exemption or abatement programs until July 15, 2020 due to the COVID-19 declared State of Emergency.
- **S.8113A, Parker / A.10521**, Mosley: This legislation will prohibit a utility corporation or municipality from terminating or disconnecting services to any residential customer for the nonpayment of an overdue charge for the duration of the COVID-19 State of Emergency. This moratorium will last 180 days from the expiration of the COVID-19 State of Emergency for those residential customers that have experienced a change in financial circumstances, and the utility corporation or municipality must offer such residential customers the right to enter into, or restructure, a deferred payment agreement without the requirement of a down payment, late fees or penalties.

## Supporting New York Workers & Businesses

Many businesses have been forced to lay off or furlough workers since the pandemic began, causing unemployment to skyrocket, and millions of New Yorkers to struggle to make ends meet. The legislation passed this week will better allow state and local governments to help workers and businesses that have been impacted. The bills passed by the Senate and Assembly include:

- **S.8181A, May / A.10294A, Stirpe:** This legislation will authorize Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) to create a COVID-19 State of Emergency loan program to provide capital funding for small businesses and not-for-profits, and to provide grants for the acquisition of personal protective equipment to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- **S.8275A , Martinez / A.10348A, Rosenthal:** This legislation will suspend the forfeiture of unemployment benefits that were previously imposed on claims based on false statements or representation for the duration of the COVID-19 declared State of Emergency.
- **S.8427, Gounardes / A.10528, Abbate:** This legislation will establish a COVID-19 pension benefit for families of public employees who die due to their workplace exposure to the disease. Where a member of a public retirement system was required to physically report to work, did in fact physically report to work as of March 1, 2020; contracted COVID-19 within 45 days of reporting to work; and COVID-19 caused or contributed to the member's death, the member's beneficiary will receive accidental death benefits.

## Combating COVID-19 and Protecting New Yorkers' Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions and exposed weaknesses in health care systems. This legislative package prioritizes protecting New Yorkers' health during this crisis and will help New York prepare for future pandemics. The bills passed by the Senate and Assembly include:

- **S.8362A, Serrano / A.10447A, Joyner:** This legislation will require, to the greatest extent possible, that COVID-19 contact tracers be representative of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities they are serving. This will mean better and more complete information can be gathered by these contact tracers, which will in turn help the entire state overcome this pandemic.
- **S.8245A, Parker / A.10517, Aubry:** This legislation will require the Department of Health to conduct a study on the health impacts of COVID-19 on minorities in New York State. This builds on the recent joint legislative hearing held on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on minority communities.
- **S.8182A, Hoylman / A.10508A, Paulin:** This legislation will allow licensed pharmacists to administer a vaccine for COVID-19 no sooner than 90 days once a vaccine has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research and after the Department of Health and State Education Department certify that having pharmacists administer the vaccine is in the best interest of public health.

- **S.8416, Metzger / A.10404A**, Rosenthal: This legislation will ensure audio-only and video-only telehealth and telemedicine services will be eligible for reimbursement. This will help ensure that individuals will continue to be able to access needed health care services, to the extent such services are deemed appropriate by the Department of Health to provide through audio-only telehealth, while still maintaining proper social distancing to prevent to spread of COVID-19.
- **S.8289B, Salazar / A.10394A**, Lentol: This legislation will require residential health care facilities to prepare and comply with an annual pandemic emergency plan. This will help residential healthcare facilities, including nursing homes, ensure the safety of their staff and residents during pandemics like COVID-19.
- **S.8363, Harckham / A.10509**, Rosenthal: This legislation will include the Commissioner of the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) as a member of the Disaster Preparedness Commission. During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers indicated a likely spike in relapse and emerging substance use disorders, including OASAS in the disaster management planning will ensure addiction service providers are not overlooked and are able to provide the best care for their patients.
- **S.8251B, Kaminsky / A.10438A**, Thiele: This legislation will authorize length of service award program (LOSAP) sponsors to make adjustments to certain point systems for volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers during the COVID-19 state disaster emergency in order to ensure those members receive adequate point credits despite restrictions on personnel response and training opportunities.

## **Maintaining Quality of Life and Important Services**

The Senate and Assembly Majorities are committed to maintaining New Yorkers quality of life as well as ensuring access to services they need during the COVID-19 pandemic, and passed legislation authorizing the use of available technologies to enable continued services and programing. The bills passed by the Senate and Assembly include:

- **S.8417, Krueger / A.10492**, Thiele: This legislation will provide financial and budgetary flexibility to local governments as they continue to operate and provide essential services and finance COVID-19 related costs by extending the rollover period for bond anticipation notes, authorizing local governments and school districts to utilize reserved funds for COVID-19 expenses and extending the repayment time frame of inter-fund loan advances made for COVID-19 expenses.
- **S.8412 , Benjamin / A.10498A**, Paulin: This legislation will enable businesses, nonprofits and religious institutions to conduct board meetings and actions through electronic and/or audio-visual technologies. This legislation will help these important institutions continue operations and the services they provide New Yorkers, despite prohibitions on in-person meetings due to the COVID-19 declared State of Emergency.
- **S.8236A, Gaughran / A.10409A**, McDonald: This legislation will, during the COVID-19 disaster declaration, authorize local governments to issue a single resolution extending the expiration date for all active building permits and zoning actions for a period of up to 120 days beyond the expiration date stated in the permit.
- **S.8410, Mayer / A.10465**, Ryan: This legislation provides public libraries that received library construction grant aid during the 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 fiscal years, but were unable to complete the project due to COVID-19, an additional 12 months from the statutory project end date to complete their projects.
- **S.8408, Comrie / A.7652A**, Paulin: This legislation will allow cemeteries the option to provide sales of cemetery lots and related services over the internet. This would



modernize cemetery operations as the existing Not-for-Profit Corporation Law does not contemplate website sales by cemetery corporations.

- **S.8414, Bailey / A.10493**, Lentol: This legislation will allow a witness or party at a preliminary hearing on a felony complaint to appear by electronic means during a state of disaster emergency.
- **S.7996B, Carlucci / A.10189A**, Ortiz: This legislation will ensure that school districts do not lose state aid for closing schools in the 2019-2020 school year in response to COVID-19.
- **S.8119C, Comrie / A.10303B**, Dinowitz: This legislation will extend paratransit certifications until August 31, 2020. Paratransit providers will also be required to provide drivers and personnel with hand sanitizer, sterile gloves, face masks and training on preventive measures to protect against the spread of infection disease.
- **S.8411, Jackson / A.10519**, Weinstein: This legislation decouples the City of New York from certain provisions in the unincorporated business tax, the general corporation tax, and the business corporation tax from recent federal changes.
- **S.8400, Benjamin / A.9789A**, Braunstein: This legislation will enable New York City to establish a 'rainy day fund.'