



New York State Senator, 35th District
Senate Democratic Leader

**ANDREA
STEWART-COUSINS**
Special Message



Dear Friend,

With a new year comes a new state Legislative Session – which is a fresh opportunity to build on the successes of the past and move our communities, and all of New York State, forward.

My top priority remains making New York a better, more affordable place to live, work and raise a family. To further that goal we must grow our economy, raise the minimum wage and pass paid family leave, lower taxes and reduce unfunded mandates, improve the quality of education New York students have access to, and ensure that government protects the rights and health of all state residents.

We also have a responsibility to rebuild the trust in state government that has been so badly shaken during the past few years. With scandal after scandal rocking New York government, we cannot bury our heads in the sand any longer. That is why the Senate Democrats that I lead have introduced stricter ethics reforms including: limiting legislator's outside income; ending the practice of politicians using campaign accounts as personal ATM's; stopping taxpayer reimbursement for legal fees; stripping pensions from legislators convicted of corruption; and closing the LLC loophole that enables huge sums of money to be spent in political contests.

Governor Cuomo declared his support for many of the Senate Democratic Conference's priorities in his 2016 State of the State Address and I am very pleased that we share so many mutual goals including our ethics and economic initiatives. However, all too often Albany is a place where good ideas and lofty rhetoric do not translate into actual results, and that is unacceptable. That is why I will continue to fight for common sense solutions to the issues facing our communities, our region and our state.

- We must make sure every child has access to the quality public education

- they deserve and that we make higher education more affordable.
- We must undo the flawed education policies that unduly burden our students with more testing and rate our teachers based on test scores without fully considering overall student performance.
 - We must continue to invest in education in our local districts by finally closing the Gap Elimination Adjustment.
 - We must lower our tax burden, our mandates on local governments and help our small businesses thrive by cutting the bureaucratic red tape they already face.
 - We must continue to build our economy and create more jobs.
 - We must combat the growing income inequality by raising the minimum wage with indexing to lift over 1 million New Yorkers out of poverty.
 - We must pass paid family leave so no New Yorker must choose between caring for a loved one or losing their job.
 - We must stand up for the health and equality of the women of New York by passing a strong - not watered down - Women's Equality Act.
 - We can do more to help those struggling with addiction including heroin and prescription drug abuse that is devastating communities across our state.
 - We must make sure that everyone has a roof over their head and a place to call home.
 - Let's invest in our crumbling infrastructure by rebuilding our roads, bridges and schools across New York and truly make New York the Empire State.

[Click here to watch my opening remarks at the start of the Legislative Session.](#)

You can follow issues of interest to you by registering at the now mobile-friendly State Senate website, www.NYSenate.gov. You can reach me via email and follow me on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) to keep up on the latest developments. Please know that I have a terrific staff in my District Office that are able to assist you with your questions and concerns.

I sincerely wish you and your family a happy and healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senator, 35th District
Senate Democratic Leader



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