



*Assemblyman*  
**Fred W.  
Thiele, Jr.**  
*Reports to the people*

**2011 LEGISLATIVE  
SESSION SUMMARY**

*Dear Constituent:*

*After too many years of gridlock and dysfunction, the 2011 Legislative Session finally proved to be one of significant accomplishment under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo. We passed an on-time, balanced 2011 State Budget that actually spent 2.2% less than last year, eliminates a \$10 billion deficit, and does not include any new taxes.*

*The Legislature built upon this accomplishment by passing several major statewide initiatives such as a 2% Property Tax Cap, Marriage Equality, Ethics Reform, and Mandate Relief. A number of important local issues were also addressed, such as the inclusion of the Carmans River Watershed in the Core Area of the Central Pine Barrens, and Public Service Commission (PSC) oversight of Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) rates. I was able to pass 11 new bills this Session including legislation for the Towns of Southampton and East Hampton as well as the Villages of North Haven and Southampton.*

*I hope this report provides you with an inside look at the accomplishments of the 2011 State Legislative Session.*

*Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance to you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Fred Thiele, Jr.*

*Fred W. Thiele, Jr.  
Member of Assembly*

**2% Property Tax Cap Enacted  
in New York State**

Any Long Islander knows that we have some of the highest property taxes in the nation. From 1998 to 2008, property taxes in New York State grew by 73%, more than twice the rate of inflation. Property taxes in New York State are 96% higher than the national average. The impact of such exorbitant property taxes is that people are leaving New York State to seek residence and employment elsewhere.

I have been a vocal advocate for property tax reform in numerous meetings and hearings across the 2nd Assembly District, including the enactment of a property tax cap. In the early 1980s, the State of Massachusetts successfully enacted a property tax cap that resulted in property tax stability for its residents. Since then, Massachusetts has dropped from leading the nation in high taxes to being 28th in the country.

This Session a Property Tax Cap was enacted in New York State. The cap applies to all local governments including special districts and school districts. The cap limits its property tax increases to 2% or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. It is one of the most stringent caps in the nation with very limited exceptions. In the case of school districts, voters may override the cap with a vote of 60% or more of the voters. In the case of all other local governments, the cap may be overridden by 60% of the governing board of the local government.

This cap is not a panacea for high property taxes. However, it is a good first step in providing school and local government managers with a useful tool for more efficient and cost-effective government.

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## Mandate Relief Provides Needed Reprieve

While the enactment of a property tax cap will change the culture of local government and school taxation, it does nothing by itself to reduce costs. One of the most significant cost drivers is unfunded State mandates on schools and local governments. Elimination of these costly and often unnecessary requirements can help local governments reduce their costs and provide services in a more efficient manner. Legislation was enacted as part of the tax cap to do just that. More than \$125 million of savings will accrue through the elimination of mandates. For example, every school district, regardless of its size is required to have its own school Superintendent. The new legislation provides that for school districts with 1,000 students or less, up to three school districts may join together to share one Superintendent.

The removal of these mandates is only the beginning of the story. The legislation also creates a State Mandate Relief Council. The Council will be charged with reviewing existing statutory and regulatory unfunded mandates and making recommendations for modification or repeal. Local governments will also be authorized to petition the Council for permanent relief from burdensome and costly mandates.



Assemblyman Thiele is joined by fellow Assemblyman Losquadro to discuss issues affecting community hospitals and healthcare at Senator Ken LaValle's Hospital Roundtable.

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New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. meets with William Floyd High School representatives from the YMCA Youth and Government Program in Albany to discuss their legislative agenda.

## Ethics Reform

After years of inaction and scandal, comprehensive ethics reform was finally enacted and signed into law. The new legislation: (a) establishes an independent Commission on Public Ethics with broad investigative power in the legislative and executive branches of government, (b) requires public officials with outside employment to make enhanced disclosure of all income and clients, and (c) strips pension benefits from public officials who violate the public trust by committing a felony.

No law by itself can guarantee honesty and good character in public officials. However, this new legislation will increase openness, transparency, and disclosure. Further it will provide for independent investigations of wrongdoings. It is a step in reversing the perception that State government is inherently corrupt.

## Controlling LIPA Rate Hikes

Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) rates have been raised seven times since 2001, increasing more than 34% without ever going before the Public Service Commission (PSC). LIPA has included costs within its fuel surcharge that exceed the industry standard and which the PSC would not allow other utilities to include in a fuel surcharge. Long Island ratepayers must have a comprehensive review of LIPA's practices by the PSC on rate requests of LIPA. LIPA's businesses and homeowners have suffered due to the lack of strong oversight of the practices and ratemaking of LIPA.

I supported new legislation that requires average customer rate increases exceeding 2.5% in a twelve-month period to be approved by the Public Service Commission after a full evidentiary hearing. The legislation is now before the Governor for approval.



Assemblyman Thiele is joined by Senator Ken LaValle, Brookhaven Town Supervisor Mark Lesko, Senator Lee Zeldin, and Assemblyman Dean Murray in celebrating a 31.5 acre acquisition in the Carmans River Watershed. Assemblyman Thiele co-sponsored legislation, which would add additional lands in the Carmans River Watershed to the Core Preservation Area of the Central Pine Barrens and further protect the ecological integrity of the sensitive ecosystem.

**Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) rates have been raised seven times since 2001, increasing more than 34% without ever going before the Public Service Commission (PSC) as required.**

## East End Benefits from Local Bills

During the 2011 Legislative Session, the State Legislature sent 677 bills to Governor Cuomo for action. While the average number of bills passing both houses was 4 per legislator, I am thrilled to have been able to have been the prime sponsor of 11 bills.

I helped draft and pass legislation that will add the Carmans River Watershed to the Core Preservation of the Central Pine Barrens. In addition, local legislation requested by the Towns of Southampton and East Hampton as well as the Villages of North Haven and Southampton were also adopted.

Further, based upon constituent input, I also passed legislation that will make our public bathing beaches safer and our local shellfish industry more economically viable. Finally, we passed State legislation to address issues relating to a State Comptroller's audit regarding overpayments to school and special districts under the Community Preservation Fund in Southampton. The legislation preserves the integrity of the Fund while protecting school taxpayers, saving the Riverhead School District \$1.3 million.

While not all of these bills may make headlines, they all solve problems and improve the quality of life in our community.

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Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. was joined by New York State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle, Southampton Town Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst, and Southampton Town Councilman Chris Nuzzi to announce the introduction of new State Legislation which would allow municipalities to increase the maximum property tax exemptions under the alternative veterans' exemptions.

## Fighting Exorbitant Gasoline Prices

I continue to carefully monitor gasoline prices on eastern Long Island. May 2011 gasoline prices peaked at over \$4 per gallon. Equally disturbing was the fact that when gasoline prices started to decline, around Memorial Day, they did so everywhere but the South Fork. Prices averaged 17 cents a gallon higher than the rest of Long Island. This was clearly an unfair business practice designed to gouge consumers in resort areas.

I immediately contacted the State Attorney General's Office. Their office is undertaking a full investigation of gas prices in New York. I have also sponsored legislation to strengthen New York's prohibition against the zone pricing of gasoline, including permitting retail competitors to bring legal action against big oil distributors when they are victimized by illegal pricing practices.

I will continue to monitor prices and keep the Attorney General informed regarding pricing practices on Long Island.

**I have sponsored legislation to strengthen New York's prohibition against the zone pricing of gasoline...**

**Assemblyman**  
**Fred W. Thiele, Jr.**

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