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# Assemblyman **Fred W. Thiele, Jr.** **2016 Legislative Summary**

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Dear Constituent:

With the 2016 New York State Legislative Session ending a short time ago, I thought this would be a great time to share with you some of the major accomplishments of the this year’s Session, which included the Legislature’s delivery of its sixth on-time State Budget.

Enclosed you will find a summary of many important new initiatives we undertook to further protect human and environmental health, invest in our schools, cut taxes, and protect our hardworking families.

As always, please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Fred W. Thiele, Jr.

## Paid Family Leave

This year’s State Budget included the longest and most comprehensive paid family leave program in the nation. When fully phased-in, employees will be eligible for 12 weeks of paid family leave when caring for an infant, a family member with a serious health condition, or to relieve family pressures when someone is called to active military service. Benefits will be phased-in beginning in 2018 at 50 percent of an employee’s average weekly wage, capped to 50 percent of the

statewide average weekly wage, and fully implemented in 2021 at 67 percent of their average weekly wage, capped to 67 percent of the statewide average weekly wage. This program will be funded entirely through a nominal payroll deduction on employees so it costs businesses – both big and small – nothing. Employees are eligible to participate after having worked for their employer for six months.

## Assembly Honors Tuskegee Airmen



Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. pictured with members of the Tuskegee Airmen who were honored by the New York State Assembly in Albany on Thursday, June 16, 2016. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Tuskegee Airmen, the all-black Air Force squadrons who served with distinction during World War II and helped lay the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. This highly decorated unit of 996 pilots and more than 15,000 ground personnel earned 14 Bronze Stars, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 744 Air Medals. These brave men defied racist stereotypes and proved their mettle in hundreds of combat missions. Their actions helped pave the way for President Truman’s 1948 executive order to fully integrate the United States military.

## South Fork Behavioral Health Initiative

Assemblyman Thiele and Senator LaValle secured \$175,000 in the Final 2016-17 State Budget to expand the ongoing South Fork Behavioral Health Initiative.

In 2014, Assemblyman Thiele and Senator LaValle assembled a South Fork Behavioral Health Roundtable to discuss the growing mental health and suicide crisis facing school-aged children in our area. Since then, the Legislators have been joined by Suffolk County, Southampton Hospital, Stony Brook Hospital, South Fork Towns, South Fork School Districts, Family Service League and other mental health care providers in securing funding, designing and then implementing a new, unprecedented community-based effort.

Over the last three years, the State Legislators have secured \$500,000 in State funding for this important regional initiative.

## Pension Forfeiture

This Session, the State Legislature gave first passage to legislation requiring elected officials and policy makers who were convicted of corruption to forfeit their pensions. Politicians who betray the public trust and use their office to line their own pockets shouldn't be rewarded with pension benefits paid for by taxpayers. An amendment to the State Constitution must pass two consecutively elected Legislatures and then be approved by the State's voters in a referendum.

## State Aid to Education Increases by \$1.47 Billion, GEA is Finally Eliminated

The strength of New York's economic future depends on the abilities of our next generation. That's why the 2016-17 State Budget provided \$24.8 billion in School Aid, the highest amount in history, a 6.5% increase

over last year. The budget also fully eliminates the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) once and for all, putting an end to the hardship it has caused our schools and to the burden it has placed on local taxpayers.



Assemblyman Thiele welcomed the Bridgehampton School Tewa Marimba Ensemble on Wednesday, March 23, 2016 during their performance on the South Concourse of the Empire State Plaza in Albany in celebration of "Music in Our Schools Month" sponsored by the New York State School Music Association.

## Cutting Taxes

New York State continues to cut middle class tax rates. The new lower tax rates, which will begin in 2018, will save New Yorkers nearly \$6.6 billion in the first four years, with annual savings reaching \$4.2 billion by 2025. Approximately 4.4 million filers will initially

benefit, growing to 6 million once fully phased in, saving an average of \$698 per filer. Once fully phased in, the new middle class tax rates will be the lowest in more than 70 years.

## Protecting the Environment

The 2016-17 State Budget increased funding for the Environmental Protection Fund to \$300 million, the highest in state history. The Budget also includes \$200 million to support community water infrastructure, \$130 million to enhance State parks and lands, and funding to train a generation of clean energy workers who will support New York State's commitment to go coal-free by 2020. The Budget also addresses Long Island's water quality crisis by funding Long Island's

Nitrogen Action Plan and the New York State Center for Clean Water Technology housed at Stony Brook University, which is developing and commercializing affordable advanced wastewater treatment systems.

Assemblyman Thiele was also able to secure \$200,000 in the Final Enacted 2016-17 New York State Budget to help protect the ecological integrity of the Peconic Estuary.



Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. welcomed representatives from the Lupus Agencies of New York State to the Assembly Chamber in Albany in recognition of Lupus Awareness Day on Wednesday, May 18, 2016. The Legislature joined the Lupus Agencies of New York State in their efforts to increase public awareness of Lupus symptoms and health effects, and to increase support for Lupus education and research programs. Assemblyman Thiele sponsored a Resolution that was adopted memorializing Governor Andrew Cuomo to proclaim May 2016 as Lupus Awareness Month in New York State.

## Combating the Heroin and Opioid Epidemic

Heroin and opioid addiction is a national epidemic that continues to plague families in communities across New York State and the East End. This Session, the State Legislature passed a package of bills that will:

1. Remove burdensome barriers to access for inpatient treatment and medication by ending prior insurance authorization to allow for immediate access to inpatient treatment and drug treatment medications.
2. Enhance addiction treatment services by increasing evaluation for individuals incapacitated
3. Strengthen community prevention strategies by reducing prescription limits for opioids from 30 days to 7 days, requiring ongoing education on addiction and pain management for all physicians and prescribers, and requiring data collection on overdoses and prescriptions.

by drugs from 48 to 72-hours, requiring hospitals to provide follow-up treatment service options, and expanding wraparound services to support long-term recovery.

## Increasing Access to Breast Cancer Screening and Treatment

Screening for breast cancer, which includes mammography, can increase the detection of the disease at an early stage, when treatment is most effective. However, structural barriers, such as lack of convenient office hours, have a significant impact on a woman's ability to be screened. This Session, the State Legislature passed new legislation to extend screening hours at 210 hospital-based mammography facilities and eliminate burdensome insurance hurdles for mammograms and other diagnostic imaging procedures. Together, these initiatives will help more women across the state gain access to the health care services they need and deserve.



Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. announces his legislation to increase from twenty-four to sixty months, the time for which reconsideration for parole for a violent felony offense shall be determined. Families of murder victims travelled to Albany to advocate for the legislation and visited the New York State Assembly Chamber. Assemblyman Thiele is joined by supporters, Assemblyman Philip A. Palmesano and Assemblyman Al Stirpe.



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

**2016  
Legislative  
Summary**

Summer 2016

## **Testing School Water for Lead Contamination**

Lead poisoning is extremely harmful to young children and may cause permanent brain damage. Schools in New York are not currently required to test their drinking water for lead, or notify parents or government officials of results. Legislation passed this Session makes New York the first state in the nation to mandate periodic testing of drinking water in schools, reporting to parents and local and state entities, and provides guidance for remediation to ensure availability of clean and safe drinking water in every school. The State will fund a portion of the testing and remediation costs and will reimburse these costs on an expedited schedule in emergency situations.