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Fall 2017

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

2017 Legislative Summary

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State Approves \$153.1 Million for 2017-2018

The adoption of the State Budget is one of the most important actions of the State Legislature. This year, we approved a balanced \$153.1 billion spending plan which complied with the State's self-imposed 2% cap on state spending. The budget implemented previously approved middle class tax cuts and enhanced the Child and Dependent Care Credit for taxpayers earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000.

While imposing a fiscally responsible budget plan for New York, this year's State Budget also insures that our important priorities, such as education and the environment, are fully addressed. The State Budget provides \$25.7 billion to the more than 700 school districts across New York State, an increase of 4.1% or about \$1

billion. In the area of higher education, a major step forward was taken for college affordability by instituting the new Excelsior Scholarship Program, an initiative to make public college tuition-free for New Yorkers who earn less than \$125,000 a year.

The State Budget also included record funding for one of my top priorities: clean water. \$2.5 billion will be provided for water infrastructure across New York State, including \$75 million for upgrades and replacements of septic systems and cesspools. This funding will provide state funds to match local efforts on septic waste being undertaken by Suffolk County, as well as the East End towns through their Community Preservation Funds.



Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr., Senator Ken LaValle and Assemblyman Anthony Palumbo presented the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) with a Resolution adopted by the State Legislature in 2017 that proclaims September 16-23 as Estuaries Week in the State of New York, in conjunction with National Estuaries Week. The Resolution was presented to PEP during its volunteer Salt Marsh Planting event on September 16, 2017.



On Monday March 27, 2017, Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. welcomed students from the Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute who were in Albany as part of the 30th Annual SOMOS El Futuro Conference. Local students were selected from East Hampton High School, Hampton Bays High School, Riverhead High School, and Southampton High School.

Local Programs Benefit From the State Budget

My advocacy for local priorities paid off during the 2017 State Budget process. The projects and programs included in the State Budget were:

Southampton Campus of Stony Brook University—\$5 million was included for general campus capital improvements.

Suffolk County Community College-Eastern Campus—\$2 million in additional state funds were included to match county

funding for the construction of a new Health and Sports Center on the Riverhead Campus.

Southern Pine Beetle Management—\$3 million to control the damage from this invasive insect in the Central Pine Barrens.

Peconic Estuary Program—\$200,000 to improve the health of the Peconic Bay.

South Fork Community Health Initiative—\$175,000 to provide school-based mental health services for middle and high school students.

Community Voices for Youth and Families of Long Island—\$30,000 each for Colonial Youth and Family Services and the Bridgehampton Child Care Center.

Thiele Earns a 100% Rating From the New York State League of Conservation Voters

The New York State League of Conservation Voters released its first State Environmental Scorecard for the 2017 State Legislative Session. This statewide organization advocates for environmental legislation. I am honored to have received a 100% score from them for the 2017 session. I was one of 13 members of the State Assembly, and the only member of the Long Island delegation, to earn a perfect score.

The ranking is based upon 16 bills introduced in the State Assembly on issues relating to climate change, clean water, clean air, renewable energy,

open space, and solid waste. I either sponsored or voted in favor of all 16 bills.

I am pleased to be recognized by the NYS League of Conservation Voters for my work on the environment during the 2017 State Legislative Session. On eastern Long Island, our environment is our economy. Our key industries of farming, fishing, tourism and second homes cannot thrive without resources such as clean water and open spaces. I look forward to continuing to pursue these goals on behalf of my district and all of New York State.



This past August, Southamptom Hospital merged with the Stony Brook Medicine healthcare system. Under the new moniker Stony Brook Southamptom Hospital, it will offer improved access to specialty care for its patients, including access to the latest research, the latest clinical trials and cutting-edge medicine that Stony Brook Medicine provides.

Southampton College Campus Renaissance Continues

In 2006, after more than 40 years as a small undergraduate liberal arts college, the 84-acre Southampton College campus was sold to Stony Brook University by Long Island University. The plan was to institute an undergraduate school for sustainability at the campus, but three years into the program, Stony Brook University attempted to shutter the campus because of SUNY budget problems.

I worked with Southampton students to successfully sue the State University to keep the campus open. Seven years later, those efforts are bearing fruit. The Southampton campus has become a center for excellence for graduate education. Nearly 600 students attended classes on the campus in the last academic year, and the prospects for the future are for continued growth.

The Marine Sciences program continues to be the anchor of the campus. The construction of a \$10

million building with state-of-the-art laboratories has placed the campus on the cutting edge of efforts to improve water quality. The Fine Arts program, with its nationally recognized creative writing program, has also continued to be a strength for the campus.

Finally, the introduction of graduate programs in health sciences is spurring the new growth in enrollment. Programs include physical therapy, occupational therapy, applied health informatics, and health administration. With the merger of Southampton Hospital and Stony Brook University Hospital, and the plan to build a new hospital on the campus, the health sciences program at the campus has a bright future.

My thanks to Stony Brook University President Sam Stanley and University Vice President Matt Whelan for their commitment to the Southampton campus.

Green Energy Assessment

I support the work of the Long Island Green Homes, a non-profit collaborative partnership of towns and community-based organizations that connects homeowners with local certified contractors who assess their home for free to identify money-saving and energy efficient improvements.

Average savings for Long Islanders who have gone through the program is about \$1,000 per year, and only projects that have been determined to pay for themselves in savings are recommended. To sign up for your free home energy audit, please visit www.longislandgreenhomes.org or call 1-800-567-2850.

South Fork Commuter Rail Service Moves Forward

South Fork elected officials continue to meet with the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) to provide increased commuter rail service between Speonk and Montauk. The proposal currently under consideration includes two additional eastbound trains during the morning rush period and two additional westbound trains during the afternoon rush period.

In addition to the increased train service, a connecting bus service would be provided from each rail station to get commuters to downtowns and major employment centers, such as schools, hospitals and government offices.

Finally, the LIRR is proposing a daily one-seat ride from Southampton, Hampton Bays and Westhampton to Penn Station for the morning commute.

The LIRR has provided local officials with a tentative rail schedule. Meanwhile, the Towns of Southampton and East Hampton are creating the connecting bus plan, which should be completed in early 2018. The plan would be funded jointly by state and local government, and the new service should be available within the next 18 months.

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



Assemblyman
Fred W.
Thiele, Jr.

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Summary

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Additional State Funding for Local Roads

Infrastructure improvements are critical to sustaining both public safety and our local economy. In recent years, I have successfully gained the funding to repave our major state arteries including NY 24, NY 27 and NY 114.

Local roads are equally as important, and I have secured a special \$1 million grant to have many of them repaved. The money will be distributed equally between the Towns of Brookhaven, Southampton, East Hampton and Shelter Island.