



Assemblywoman **MARGARET MARKEY**

Reports to the People

SPRING 2013

A message from Assemblywoman Margaret Markey...

Dear Neighbor:

The first few months of the legislative session have been busy ones, starting with passage of the NY SAFE Act in response to gun violence. This was followed by deliberations that led to the third straight on-time budget for New York State.

I am pleased to report that I have been named to the influential Assembly Ways and Means Committee where I will now participate in making fiscal policy for our state. In addition to chairing the Assembly Tourism, Parks, Arts, and Sports Development Committee, my other committee assignments continue to include Labor, Government Operations, and Racing and Wagering.

In legislative activity, I chaired a public hearing of my Tourism-Parks Committee to hear testimony about tourism promotion for New York State and the "I Love NY" program. Tourism marketing produces enormous economic benefits across the state and I am happy to report that tourism funding has been increased this year to \$60 million, up from \$19 million last year.

I also joined the Assembly Codes Committee to hold a public hearing for my expanded Child Victims Act which would completely eliminate the criminal and civil statute of limitations for childhood sexual abuse crimes. We heard testimony about the long-term impact of abuse on victims, underscoring the need to eliminate this archaic impediment to justice for victims and hold accountable organizations who hide abusers.

Look for my next report on our work in Albany as we will continue to deal with other important issues as the legislative session continues over the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Margaret M. Markey

New State Budget Invests in Schools, Job Creation; Taxes Lowest in 60 Years

The State of New York is now in a new fiscal year and the Legislature and Governor have recently adopted a new state budget that boosts funding for schools and colleges, invests in job creation programs, and cuts taxes for middle-class families and businesses.

The budget provides \$690 million in tax relief, locking in the lowest tax rate in 60 years for middle-income families. More than 99 percent of those filing returns statewide benefitted from last year's tax reductions and this year's budget extends that reduction for three additional years. In addition, many taxpaying families with at least one child will receive a one-time \$350 rebate check next year.

On time for the third year in a row, the new budget provides a \$364 million increase for New York City schools over last year and a \$240 million restoration for future years. There are also new grants for full-day and half-day pre-K seats and Extended Learning Time programs.

Parochial and private schools will also receive \$137.5 million in aid this year as well as an additional \$4.2 million for safety equipment.

Funding for public libraries statewide this year is \$86.9 million, an increase of \$4.2 million over last year and for the second year in a row aid to community colleges increased. There was also extra funding for college opportunity programs for disadvantaged students.

Businesses will be encouraged to create new jobs as budget provisions phase out utility surcharges over the next few years and a tax credit is created for businesses that hire veterans.

As a member of the Joint Transportation Budget Conference Committee, I helped secure a 21 percent increase in funding for infrastructure projects that will improve bridges, streets, and highways throughout the state. These projects will create hundreds of construction jobs and make our communities safer.

APPROVE UPGRADED LOCOMOTIVES — One item in the new budget is of particular interest to Maspeth and Middle Village: It is \$3.1 million for the Long Island Railroad to upgrade equipment it owns and leases to NY & Atlantic Railroad that uses it on the rail line through our communities. As a member of the Joint Transportation Budget Committee, I was able to see that the original request was increased so that one pollution-spewing engine will be upgraded each year over the next three years. Residents who live along this line have waited too long for this progress and I am pleased that we can look forward to improvement in noise and air quality over the coming years.



SALUTE TO STATE PARKS — The focus was on state parks on May 1st as Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey and I were joined by Robin Dropkin (L) of Parks & Trails, which sponsors the statewide "I Love My Park Day." With us is Mark Walter, NYS Coalition on Natural & Community Services.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MARGARET MARKEY

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HONOR IRISH HERITAGE AT TOWN HALL — Irish Counsel General Noel Kilkenny was guest of honor at a reception for an historical exhibition about the contributions of Irish Americans in building New York's legendary Erie Canal. The exhibit at Maspeth Town Hall was a project of the Irish American Heritage Museum in Albany. From left with me are: Counsel General Kilkenny, Eileen Reilly, Executive Director of Maspeth Town Hall, and Jeffrey Cleary, Executive Director of the Museum.



FAREWELL AND WELCOME IN 104TH PRECINCT — Earlier this year at a tribute at Maspeth Town Hall, the community bid farewell and offered thanks for his outstanding work to Deputy Inspector Cody who set new records for reducing crime in the 104th Precinct. We had the opportunity to welcome Captain Christopher Manson as our new precinct commander and look forward to working with him.



HOPE FOR PUBLIC FUTURE FOR STEINWAY MANSION — The Steinway Mansion in Astoria is an architectural and historic treasure of Queens and I hope it can be preserved for public use. I have taken NYS Economic Development Commissioner Kenneth Adams and State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey to see the Mansion and both encouraged us to seek a new public future for the landmark building. The result is the organization of the Friends of Steinway Mansion which has recently gone to work to make the public aware of the building and its potential for Queens. Here in front of the Mansion with Commissioner Adams and me are, from left, John Halberian, who grew up in the house; Queens Tourism Council's Rob MacKay; and Jack Friedman and Carol Conslato of the Queens Chamber of Commerce.



THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY — I want to thank the residents of the 30th Assembly District for their repeated generosity in response to the call to help our neighbors in need. Several truckloads of your donations were carried in December to families in Breezy Point and the Rockaways who suffered from the effects of Hurricane Sandy. I am grateful to FDNY Squad 288 for its assistance in getting your donations to those who most needed them. Many of you also responded generously when I partnered with the Central Astoria Local Development Corporation to provide holiday gifts for kids at Hour Children in Astoria. Here they are received by Sister Tisa and staff and families.



State Grant to Promote Tourism Economy in Queens

It was a great pleasure to attend the regular meeting of the Queens Tourism Council last month to announce a new State grant of \$70,000 to help the Council continue its outstanding work in marketing and promotion of tourism in Queens under the auspices of the Queens Economic Development Corporation.

As Chair of the Assembly's Tourism, Parks, Arts, and Sports Development Committee, I take great pride in the fact that I was the borough's first director of tourism when I was a member of the Borough President's economic development staff.

Queens has a lot of terrific attractions for visitors and I am delighted to provide this grant to help tell the world about them. There are more than 43,000 tourism-related jobs in the borough and the marketing programs of the Queens Tourism Council will also help boost our local economy.



With me here are, front from left: Gayle Baron of the LIC Partnership, Richard Mazda of the Secret Theater, QEDC Executive Director Seth Bornstein, Gail Roseman of Sholom & Zuckerbrot; and Gary Kesner of Silvercup Studios; Back are USTA's Jenn Matthews, Tourism Council Director Rob MacKay; Jennifer Walden Weprin and Louis Armstrong House.

My Local Grants Will Assist Vital Community Organizations

It is a great pleasure to announce that I am able to provide state grants to important community organizations this year. The entire community will benefit from the dedicated work and activities of many vital non-profit groups in the 30th Assembly District.

In Maspeth, this includes funding to enable the **Maspeth Chamber of Commerce** to bring the Doe Fund street maintenance project back to Grand Avenue and adjacent commercial areas. In addition to sanitation and beautification duties, it will also help return greenery to the street during the warm weather months.

Other Maspeth and Middle Village organizations receiving funding from me this year include: **Maspeth Town Hall; POMOC-Polonians Organized to Minister to Our Community; SelfHelp Maspeth Senior Center; Middle Village Property Owners Association; COMET; and the United Veterans and Fraternal Organizations** for the Maspeth Memorial Day Parade.

In Woodside, funding this year is going to: **Woodside on the Move; Samaritan Village-Woodside Senior Center; Self-Help Big Six Towers Senior Center; St. Mary's Golden Age Club; Child Center of NY Head Start; the NY Junior Tennis League's After School Youth Tennis Program; Boulevard Gardens American Legion Post 1836; and the Catholic War Veterans Post 870.**

In Astoria, Dutch Kills and Sunnyside, funding provided by me has been allocated to the **Central Astoria Local Development Coalition; the Hunger Prevention Program at Trinity Lutheran**



Congresswoman Grace Meng and I recently visited the SelfHelp Maspeth Senior Center to talk to members about our work in Washington and Albany.

Church; Astoria Queens Sharing & Caring; and the Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance.

I am delighted to also provide funding this year to: **Vietnam Veterans Chapter 32, the Diocese of Brooklyn's Drug Prevention Program, the summer tutoring program of Everyone Reading, Queens Theater in the Park, and Greater Ridgewood Restoration's anti-graffiti program.**

A Warm Welcome to Our New Maspeth High School

It was a delight to tour the new Maspeth High School recently with Principal Abdul-Mutakabbir and hear how successfully the school is operating since it moved into its new building in Maspeth.

He explained that the mission of his dedicated faculty and staff is "to lead students on the pathway to become lifelong learners with strong character through an understanding of classical liberal arts, and empirical sciences." He hopes what they achieve will become a model for other schools to follow.

On our visit, we stopped into several classrooms to observe students at work in Latin, as well as English and Social Studies. We also saw the spectacular facilities for the Music Program and the Environmental Curriculum and visited the Science Laboratory to watch student experiments underway. A Dance Studio will soon be completed to round out the school's Classical Arts programming.

In addition to all the advanced academic programs, Maspeth High school also offers many extracurricular activities including clubs and sports which are essential components of the high school experience.



Principal Khurshid Abdul-Mutakabbir led me and the schools Operations Manager Mario Matos Jr. (R) on a tour of the state-of-the-art music facility with music instructor James DiMeglio (L).

FOR THE RECORD IN ALBANY

Some Important Achievements

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF – Tax relief for the vast majority of condo and co-op owners was part of our landmark legislation signed into law by the Governor a few months ago. These owners, many of whom are middle-class families, often living on fixed incomes, have previously paid a disproportionate share of city property taxes. The new provisions will be phased in over three years.

RAISING MINIMUM WAGE – Creating a more realistic minimum wage has long been a goal for me. The bill I sponsored this year to increase it to \$9 per hour has now been signed into law. For too long families living on minimum wage salaries have struggled to make ends meet while working harder than ever to pay for rent, food, and family necessities. Now, with this new base wage phased-in over the next three years, working families will see a rise in their purchasing power as they spend their paychecks at local businesses, something that will also benefit the local economy.

GUN SAFETY – As the national debate on this issue continues, New York State has acted to make our communities and streets safer from gun violence. We have enacted the NY SAFE Act, a bill I sponsored, which contains regulations for legal gun use, stronger penalties for criminals, and an expansion of existing law to address the mental health aspects of this important issue. The common-sense reforms embodied in this legislation will make New York a safer place to live by ensuring that all gun purchases are subject to a background check, and banning high-capacity magazines and military-style assault weapons.

RORY'S REGULATION – The shocking death last year of a Sunnyside boy, 12-year-old Rory Staunton, has resulted in a change in how hospitals deliver pediatric care. In creating “Rory’s Regulations,” the State Department of Health is taking steps to require hospitals to adopt first-in-the-nation best practices for early identification and treatment of sepsis, a medical condition which is said to be the number one killer in hospitals. Some of the steps include a requirement that a hospital not release a pediatric patient until results of a critical test are reported, and enabling a parent to remain with a child during treatment.

WORKER COMP & UNEMPLOYMENT – These programs are lifelines for workers and their families when disaster or job loss strikes. Reforms to these systems will reduce the cost to businesses while increasing benefits for workers. They include relief for self-insured businesses, increasing competitiveness in the workers’ comp insurance market; new anti-fraud measures and penalties; help to get the unemployed back to work more quickly; and increased minimum and maximum benefits for unemployed workers. Estimated savings to employers as a result of insurance reform in New York City alone is estimated to be \$183 million.

*Some of Our Unfinished Business
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Some of Our Unfinished Business

While the Legislature has many accomplishments so far this year, there are several other important issues that remain to be addressed. The Assembly has adopted legislation on these important topics that is still awaiting consideration in the Senate:

HYDROFRACKING – I continue to have concerns about the health and safety of this risky technique for extracting natural gas in New York State and voted to approve a two-year moratorium on issuance of permits for drilling. We need to fully understand the impact of this activity to our environment and to the health and safety of our residents. Our bill will allow for continued examination of the effects of this controversial process on public health and the environment.

EARLY VOTING – The Assembly has approved legislation I sponsored to bring early voting to New York State. This reform

would help expand participation in voting by providing a two-week period before an election when a voter may cast their ballot. The change would give disabled voters and those who work non-traditional hours more flexibility to cast their votes, would result in shorter lines at the polls, and give the Board of Elections enough time to ensure that no one votes twice in the same election.

CONSUMER CREDIT FAIRNESS – Abusive debt collection practices plague working families, seniors, domestic violence victims, and low-income families. I voted for the Consumer Credit Fairness Act to put an end to overly-aggressive practices by requiring the court system itself to notify consumers of a pending action against them and providing more information about that action; shortening the period of time an old debt can be pursued; and denying a third party the right to sue a consumer for expired debt.