



# Assemblyman **Michael Miller**

*Reports to the People*

SUMMER 2012

## **Miller Bill Designating Vets Affairs Police as Peace Officers Passes Assembly and Senate, moves to Governor for Signature**

Assemblyman Mike Miller's landmark legislation granting peace officer status to members of the federal Veterans Administration Police in the State of New York passed the Assembly and Senate by a wide margin (A.8657).

Under New York State law, peace officers are granted the ability to make warrantless arrests, use physical and deadly force, issue appearance tickets and navigation summonses, and have the power to seize firearms in the course of an investigation. This bill would give Veterans Administration police officers these rights. Additionally, V.A police officers would be able to bring cases in a court of law.



*Assemblyman Miller meets with veterans at the St. Albans VA Hospital, one of New York's many facilities guarded by the VA police officers.*

## **Miller Passes Tough on Crime Legislation**

In recognition of this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week, Assemblyman Mike Miller helped pass several measures to increase aid and assistance for crime victims and their families to better allow them to rebuild their lives. National Crime Victims' Rights Week was April 22-28 this year.

### **Protecting Victims from Further Harm**

The legislative package includes a bill that would authorize courts to revoke the firearms licenses and seize the weapons of individuals who have been ordered to treatment or committed to a mental health facility (A.3081). Currently, state law does not allow the court to seize firearms and revoke firearm licenses from these individuals.

### **Easing Financial Hardships for Family Members of Crime Victims**

In addition, Assemblyman Mike Miller helped pass a measure that would expand eligibility for compensation from the Crime Victims Board (A.3592). This bill would allow individuals maintaining significant and long-term relationships with homicide victims to be eligible for compensation from the Crime Victims Board for actual out-of-pocket losses and counseling expenses.

**Assemblyman Mike Miller also lobbied for legislation that would:**

- Ensure all records of parole interviews for sex offenders are transmitted to the Office of Mental Health for review by the civil commitment case review panel (A.8917)
- Change the reporting requirements pertaining to restitution and fair treatment standards for the Office of Victim Services from annual to every two years and consolidate reporting requirements regarding victims services programs, allowing for a more thorough analysis of the manner in which crime victims' needs are met (A.9025)
- Allow the courts to direct antitrust fines to be paid to the Office of Victim Services, putting more funds into the programs that help victims (A.9028).



*Girl Scouts Rachel Malken, Victoria Santos, Kirsten O'Sullivan, and Assemblyman Mike Miller.*

## **Recognizing the Girl Scouts**

Assemblyman Mike Miller proudly presented three local Girl Scouts with citations congratulating them on their recent receipt of the Gold Award, the scouting organization's highest honor. To earn the Gold Award, Girl Scouts must be in high school, receive the Silver Award, or complete two "Journeys," or community service projects.

**Girl Scouts®**

## Miller Announces Sales Tax Exemption on Clothing, Footwear under \$110

Assemblyman Mike Miller announced that New York State has once again removed the 4 percent state sales tax on clothing, footwear and related items sold for less than \$110 each, as of April 1st.

The tax-free offer applies to all relevant items purchased in person, over the Internet, by phone or by mail. This will be the second consecutive year for the program, with the qualifying amount for the exemption doubling over last year. Last year, it applied to apparel at or below \$55.

The sales tax cut is estimated to save taxpayers \$210 million. It will also provide businesses with an influx of customers, including shoppers from neighboring states like New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

For more information on the sales tax exemption, visit the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website at [www.tax.ny.gov](http://www.tax.ny.gov).



Assemblyman Miller (second from left) is pictured with Maria Thomson, Rob MacKay, and staff from Karako's Suits on Jamaica Avenue in Woodhaven where he touted the sales tax break.

## Miller Fights for Equal Pay

Assemblyman Mike Miller fought for equal pay and helped the Assembly pass a legislative package that would work to end wage discrimination statewide. The legislation is accompanied by a resolution proclaiming April 17, 2012, as Equal Pay Day in New York State (K.1141).

The Assembly legislation would make it easier to enforce equal pay regulations, while establishing a state policy of setting salaries based on comparable work. The legislation would:

Enact the New York State Fair Pay Act to address and enforce pay equity, including broadening equivalent job definitions, determining equivalent skills, making it unlawful for an employer to discriminate between employees on the basis of gender, race or national origin

and ensuring that traditional and minority jobs are not undervalued (A.6130-A);

Establish a state policy of equal pay for similar work regardless of sex, race or national origin (A.6448-A);

Implement a state policy that compensates employees in state service equally for work of comparable value by eliminating wage inequality in job titles segregated by sex, race or national origin and requiring civil services to establish methods to review and fix those titles (A.1780-A); and

Design and publish a report evaluating wage disparities of public employees related to job titles, segregated by the gender, race and/or national origin of employees in the same position (A.9623).

Assemblyman Miller noted that, na-

tionally, women make 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. While women in New York fare slightly better on average, making 83 cents for every dollar men earn, this still amounts to an annual gap of nearly \$8,700 between men and women working full time in New York, with women of color being subject to even greater disparities.

With nearly 40 percent of American homes relying on the woman as the family breadwinner, families are missing out on resources that could be used to pay bills, put food on the table and help pay the cost of a child's education.

For more than 10 years, the Assembly has passed legislation to address pay equity throughout New York, Assemblyman Miller added.

## Miller: Turnaround Policy Deserves an F

**Assemblyman Mike Miller issued a statement blasting the New York City Department of Education turnaround policy. In his statement, which appears below, Assemblyman Miller called on the City to restore funding to schools to ensure students and teachers are given the resources they need to succeed. Assemblyman Miller's statement appears at right:**

*School turnarounds represent the absolute worst possibility in our education system. They unfairly penalize teachers and jeopardize the education of students. Every year, we ask teachers to do more and more with less and less. We are taking away the incentive for young aspiring adults to want to become teachers.*

*The City continues to take away funding from our schools. This results in cutting important programs and services, such as sports and fine arts, after school programs, remedial services, and psychological and counseling support. Because we have taken away the essential services our students need to succeed and their performance has dropped and the blame has fallen on our teachers. But we have increased our requirements for standardized testing, created a dubious teacher evaluation system, and given teachers more and more out of*

*classroom assignments. Now, Department of Education bureaucrats are coming in and telling our teachers how unsuccessful they are and how they should do their jobs.*

*I have seen the success of these schools. I have visited the math peer mentoring students at Richmond Hill High School. I got the chance to speak to the Global Students group at John Adams High School. These schools are full of bright students who are going to make a difference in our world.*

*The turnaround policy is failing our communities, it is failing our teachers, and most importantly, it is failing our children. I wholeheartedly oppose this policy and will do everything in my power as a Member of the New York State Assembly to ensure our schools are not victims of this strategy of failure. This misguided policy deserves an F.*

# Miller Announces First Early Budget Since 1983

Assemblyman Mike Miller helps pass the 2012-13 state budget, the first early budget since 1983. The \$132.6 billion budget closes the state's \$3.5 billion deficit and restores critical funding for education and health care, funds important job-creation and infrastructure programs, while continuing the lowest middle-class tax rate in 58 years, which cut taxes for 99 percent of New Yorkers in December.

In addition, as of April 1, New York State has once again exempted the state's 4 percent sales tax on clothing, footwear and related items sold for less than \$110 each so working families can save more of their hard-earned dollars.

## Keeping the Promise: Investing in Education

Assemblyman Mike Miller fought to increase school aid 4 percent – or \$805 million. That includes a \$111.5 million increase in Foundation Aid, a \$400 million increase in the Gap Elimination Adjustment restoration and a full restoration of \$239 million for expense-based aids. In addition, \$125 million will be available through a competitive grant process.

## Delivering Higher Education Funding

Recognizing the critical role that community colleges play in job training and retraining, the Assembly Majority promised to increase state support to the state's public community colleges. The final budget increases support to \$2,272 per-FTE student for a total of \$22.1 million for SUNY community colleges and \$9.1 million for CUNY community colleges. The base aid increase is \$150 per-FTE student, the first community college base aid increase in five years.

In addition, the budget provides \$1.6 million to SUNY child-care centers, a \$653,000 restoration, and \$1.3 million to CUNY child-care centers, a \$544,000 restoration. The spending plan also restores \$27.8 million to be distributed equally among the three SUNY teaching hospitals.

## Lending a Helping Hand to Our Most Vulnerable

Assemblyman Mike Miller fought to include \$16 million for full implementation of the 10 percent public-assistance grant increase. It will increase 5 percent on July 1, 2012, and an additional 5 percent on Oct. 1, 2012.

## EPIC Restorations for Co-payment Assistance

The 2012-13 state budget restores \$30.6 million to the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program – helping reinstate co-payment assistance for approximately 300,000 EPIC enrollees. Currently, seniors enrolled in the EPIC program are forced to pay 25 percent of the cost of each prescription drug. With the co-payment assistance restored, enrollees will return to paying no more than \$20 co-payment for each prescription.

## Helping the Unemployed

The state budget appropriates \$6.5 billion for unemployment insurance benefits. This amount reflects an increase of \$2.25 billion over the executive budget proposal due to federal extensions passed in February.

## Increasing Health Care Spending, Reducing Unfunded Mandates

The final budget increases health care spending by 4 percent, making our state a healthier, more secure place to live. The plan also includes a provision for the state to take over

the local share of the costs of Medicaid growth, to be phased in over three years, saving local governments \$1.2 billion over the next five years. Currently, all growth over 3 percent is paid by the state. Additionally, the budget provides for the state to relieve local governments from Medicaid administrative burdens. These measures provide mandate relief to local governments and municipalities – providing them the opportunity to cut property taxes.

The budget also includes \$34.3 million to maintain the right for spousal refusal, ensuring that seniors with ailing spouses who are in need of long-term care services are protected against losing assets that are critical to their well-being.

In addition, the final budget includes funding for the following:

- Home and Personal Care Worker Benefits (\$10 million);
- Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (\$5 million);
- public health and wellness programs at SUNY teaching hospitals (\$2 million);
- additional funding for infertility programs (\$2 million);
- Family Planning Services (\$750,000);
- School Based Health Centers (\$557,000);
- HIV/AIDS Community Service Programs (CSP) (\$525,000);
- HIV/AIDS Multi Service Agencies (MSA) (\$525,000);
- NORC and Neighborhood NORC programs (\$458,000); and
- Breast Cancer Network (\$50,000).

## Helping Businesses Create and Retain Jobs

The 2012-13 final budget provides \$794.6 million to various Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) projects to help promote business growth, leading to job creation and revitalized communities throughout the state.

## Supporting Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses

The final budget also allocates \$1.6 million in the area of Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE). In addition, support for the Minority- and Women-owned Business Development and Lending Program was increased by \$365,000 to a total appropriation of \$1 million.

Assemblyman Miller said the funding will be used to develop a new computerized system to better monitor MWBE access to state contracting opportunities, and to expand the Department of Economic Development's MWBE workforce by 15 full-time equivalent positions. These budget provisions further the goal of 20 percent participation by MWBEs.

## Bolstering Housing Programs

Assemblyman Mike Miller helped increase funding for essential preservation programs by \$2.2 million. A total of \$14.3 million will be dedicated to the construction and rehabilitation of quality, affordable housing. More than \$10 million is earmarked for the Neighborhood Preservation Program and \$4.2 million for the Rural Preservation Program. Last year, the programs were funded at \$8.48 million and \$3.54 million, respectively.

## MTA Payroll Tax Cut

Assemblyman Mike Miller helped permanently eliminate the MTA payroll tax for qualifying small businesses with annual payrolls of \$1.25 million or less and for those who are self-employed and earn less than \$50,000 per year. In addition, it

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Assemblyman Mike Miller honored School Crossing Guards from both the 102nd and 104th precinct for the great work that they do. Assemblyman Miller had a ceremony called School Crossing Guard Recognition Day for each of the precincts in which 4 crossing guards from each precinct were given a New York State Assembly Citation detailing their years of service and their post. Assemblyman Miller added "These guards are the unsung heroes of our communities. They protect our children and their school zones and we owe them a large debt of gratitude."



*Assemblyman Mike Miller along with Santos Crespo President of Local 372, Captain Martin Briffa and the School Crossing Guards of the 102nd Precinct.*



*Assemblyman Mike Miller, Paul Narson, Senator Serf Maltese, Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley, Sal Candela, Tania Broschart, Assemblywoman Grace Meng, Assemblywoman Marge Markey, Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Senator Joe Addabbo, and Pat Toro.*

**Honoring Our Heroes**

Assemblyman Mike Miller and several elected officials join together to honor our fallen heroes at the opening of the Moving Wall Memorial in Juniper Valley Park, which displays the names of soldiers who lost their lives while serving in the nation's armed forces during the Vietnam War.

**Early Budget** continued from page 3

exempts schools, both public and private, from having to pay the tax. Additionally, many small businesses will see a considerable decrease in the tax, including those companies with payrolls up to \$1.75 million.

**Cutting Taxes for 99 Percent of New Yorkers**

Assemblyman Mike Miller fought for fair taxes for the middle class. The 2012-13 state budget continues new tax brackets first established last December in which rates for 4.4 million people were reduced, resulting in a tax cut of \$690 million for middle class and working families. This middle-class tax cut is paid for with a higher tax bracket for those making over \$2 million per year – which is less than 1 percent of all New York residents.

**Foreclosure Prevention Program**

Assemblyman Mike Miller fought for the Foreclosure Preven-

*“By asking the wealthiest New Yorkers to pay a little more, we were able to ease the heavy financial burden on so many hardworking families across the state,”*  
*-Assemblyman Miller*

tion Program, which provides legal assistance, counseling and other support services to homeowners, will be funded over a three-year period with a first-year investment of \$25 million. As part of this funding, existing program contracts will be extended for at least six months.