



Assemblymember Jim Brennan

REPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

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Education Issues Mark Budget Process

A set of controversial education proposals by Governor Cuomo dominated the state budget this winter. The Governor submitted a budget that tied an increase in state aid to the schools to a set of major policy changes on the use of test scores, teacher tenure, charter schools and others. His budget bills were written so that if the Legislature did not approve the changes there would be no increase in education funding. Perhaps the worst proposal from the Governor was an increase in the use of student test scores for teacher ratings to 50%, up from 20%, on an overall rating scale of 100, with 35 of the 50 remaining points of the rating scored by outside evaluators rather than the principals of the schools. Using student test scores as factors in evaluating and potentially terminating teachers and principals and closing schools is called “high-stakes testing.” Critics of high-stakes testing cite a worsening environment for teaching and learning that has transformed schools into test prep factories. In addition, critics say there are too many factors in students’ lives outside the teacher’s control, and in the variation in test results, to truly correlate student test scores with teacher effectiveness.

February and March saw protests from parents and teachers on the Governor’s proposals. My office collected about 1,000 signatures against the Governor’s proposals, which were presented to his office. In addition, local parents, teachers and students came to Albany and held protests around the schools to express their concerns.

The Results

The New York City school system has received a 6% increase in funding from the state, a little over \$500 million. The aid will be subject to a set of standards for teacher and principal evaluations developed by the Regents by June 30. The New York City Department of Education must then submit a plan to comply with the standards approved by the Regents by November 15. The Governor’s original proposal, with specified percentages of 50% of the rating by test scores and 35% by outside evaluators, has been removed. Instead, the Commissioner of Education is given the authority to determine the weight and scoring ranges relating to the use of test scores, determine the standards for the test scoring and set the target for annual improvement for the students. Local measures will still be permitted to be used to rate the teachers, including non-test measures of growth, and the Commissioner will have the power to determine how much weight to use for this measure. The Commissioner will also have the power to select the weight of outside evaluators in

teacher observations and retain a proper level of authority for principals. My office is sponsoring a local meeting with the two Regents from Brooklyn to allow local residents to voice their concerns. (See Box)

What’s Wrong? **Why can’t the Legislature just reject the Governor’s proposals?**

Two decisions by the state’s highest court, the Court of Appeals, have given the Governor too much power in the budget process. Both in 2001 and 2004 the Court of Appeals ruled that the Governor can submit law and policy changes in budget bills that spend money and the Legislature cannot change them. A provision of the state constitution says, “The Legislature may not alter an appropriation bill submitted by the Governor except to strike out or reduce items therein, but it may add thereto items of appropriation ...” This provision is called the “no-alteration”

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Assemblymember Brennan speaking before his colleagues in Albany, in support of his bill to amend the public service law, in relation to filing gas safety reports. This bill would require gas corporations to produce an annual gas safety report for the purposes of increasing transparency, accountability, and public safety.

SAVE THE DATE
ANNUAL VOLUNTEER FAIR
Thursday, June 4, 2015 See Page 3

clause. Governors began using this clause to submit changes in law in the 1990s; the State Assembly sued claiming the Governor could not change the law in such a manner, but the Court of Appeals ruled against the Legislature and said the Governor could do this. The Court said the Governor could abuse this power, for instance, by trying to change the definitions of a crime in the budget bills, which would not be permitted. However, what is permitted and what is not permitted is not absolutely clear. In 2010, after disputes with Governor Paterson during the budget process, the Governor threatened to submit his original budget in an emergency spending bill after the budget deadline. If the Legislature did not approve such a bill, spending authorizations would lapse and the state government would start shutting down. As you can imagine, the Legislature is reluctant to risk such a confrontation and tries to negotiate with the Governor after he submits the budget.

Governor Cuomo has been pushing the limits of his power by submitting appropriation bills that contain major legal and policy changes. The Legislature could simply refuse to adopt them until the budget deadline has passed. Then the Governor could submit these same proposals in a bill to extend spending after the deadline has passed, and if the Legislature refused to pass the bill, the state government would have to shut down. The Legislature can negotiate and try to persuade the Governor to modify his proposals rather than risk this confrontation. The change directing the Regents to adopt the teacher and principal evaluation standards is the result of this negotiation.

State constitution must be changed to restore balance of power

In 2005 the Legislature placed a constitutional amendment on the ballot to allow the Legislature to change the language of budget bills, but it was defeated. We need to try this again, and my office will submit a proposal to do this. It cannot appear on the ballot until 2017, and of course it would have to pass both houses of the Legislature.

Pulling the plug on high-stakes testing

My office is working with attorneys from the Assembly to analyze whether or not the state can eliminate using test scores to rate teachers and principals. This requirement is part of the state's agreement with the Federal government as part of No Child Left Behind, which links Federal Title I funding for the schools to certain Federal standards. I believe the state has the flexibility to use non-test growth measures for student performance, and we will develop legislation to address this issue.



Assemblymember Brennan joined by Sue Donoghue, Prospect Park Alliance President, Mayor de Blasio, Comptroller Stringer, Assemblymember Simon and Councilmember Lander at Prospect Park Baseball Association's Opening Day. Photo Bess Adler.

Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE)

Senior citizens, 62 years of age or older, who live in rent-regulated housing, have an annual household income of \$50,000 or less and pay more than one-third of the household's total monthly income for rent may qualify for the NYC SCRIE Program and have their rent frozen and be exempt from future rent increases.

Disabled individuals, at least 18 years old living in a rent-regulated apartment as the named tenant, receiving Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension or compensation or disability-related Medicaid, have a household income of less than \$50,000 and spend more than one-third of monthly household income on rent, may qualify for the NYC DRIE program and have rent frozen and be exempt from future rent increases.

If you believe that you are eligible for either the SCRIE or DRIE program, please feel free to contact Assemblymember Brennan's office for assistance in completing an application.



Assemblymember Brennan joined by Alan Dubrow, former Chair of Community Board 12, Louis Welz, CEO of COJO of Flatbush and COJO Board President Moshe Zakheim.



Assemblymember Brennan spoke at the Rider's Alliance press conference urging Governor Cuomo to increase funding for the MTA's operating budget. At this time, the Governor has yet to make a proposal to fund the MTA Capital Program as the legislative session draws to a close.

UPCOMING EVENTS...



ASSEMBLYMEMBER JIM BRENNAN

invites you to join him in
A conversation and a Q&A with
Dr. Kathleen M. Cashin and Dr. Lester W. Young
The two Brooklyn representatives of the New York State Board of Regents

The Regents and the Education Commissioner have been given the power to set new standards for teacher and principal evaluations by the State Legislature in the recently enacted budget. They must adopt new standards by June 30th, and school districts must submit proposals to be approved by the Regents and the Education Commissioner by November 15th. Among the powers granted:

- develop the weightings for test scores for rating teachers and principals
- the weightings for principal observations and outside evaluations
- scoring ranges and growth targets

The Legislature blocked the Governor's budget proposal that set test scores as 50% of a teacher's rating and 35% on an outside evaluator other than the principal. However, the agency still has the discretion on what these weights are.

*Please come to this important discussion and opportunity for local parents, teachers and residents to be heard on this vital question.
Brooklyn has 2 of the 17 Regents.*

"The Regents are responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State, presiding over The University and the New York State Education Department"

Thursday, May 21st, 2015

PS 10

511 7th Avenue

Between 17th Street and Prospect Avenue

7:00PM - 8:30PM



For more information about this event or any community issue, contact Assemblymember Brennan's office at 718-788-7221.

Brooklyn Volunteers! lend a hand

Thursday, June 4th | 5:30 to 8:00 PM

at the Park Slope Armory YMCA
361 15th Street (7th/8th Avenues)

The BROOKLYN VOLUNTEER FAIR will bring together nearly 70 Brooklyn-serving organizations that rely on volunteers to enrich our communities. Opportunities abound for families, individuals, seniors, students... anyone with a spirit for giving!

This event is sponsored by Assemblymember Jim Brennan



BrooklynVolunteerFair



@VolunteerFairBK

Community Partners...
New York Methodist Hospital, Park Slope Civic Council, Borough President Eric Adams, City Council Members Brad Lander and Carlos Manchaca, Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, State Senator Velmanette Montgomery and Community Boards 6, 7, 12 + 14

F G
(15th Street - Prospect Park Subway Station)
B61
(Barrell Pritchard Square)
B67 / B69
(7th Avenue / 15th Street)

Community Service Credit
available for middle school, high school, and college students through many of the participating organizations



FREE + OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

For questions about this event or any other community issue please contact Assembly Member Jim Brennan's office at 718.788.7221.



Assemblymember Brennan participated in Read Across America and read "Click, Clack, Moo." to a great audience at the Windsor Terrace Library.



Assemblymember Brennan presents Norberto "Junito" Allende, a recent graduate of the Turning Point Education Center in Brooklyn, with an Assembly proclamation acknowledging his outstanding achievements and nomination for the New York Association for Continuing/Community Education Student of the Year Award.

Assemblymember Brennan's

multi-lingual staff, including Urdu and Russian, is able to assist constituents with a variety of issues including: tenant/landlord issues, entitlement programs, and consumer and quality of life issues. We partner with numerous community based organizations that have the ability to converse in other languages:

- Council of Peoples Organization at 718 434-3266 assists South Asians
- Good Shepherd Single Stop Service Center at 718 965-3313 x. 409 for Spanish
- Boro Park Jewish Community Council 718 972-6600 for Yiddish

UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Assemblymember Brennan partners with the Prospect Park Alliance in announcing the **2015 Shred Fest** at Prospect Park West and 3rd Street
Sunday, May 17th 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Voter Registration Drive
at PS 217 schoolyard, Coney Island Ave., between Newkirk and Foster Ave.
Sunday, May 31st 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

FREE Breast Cancer Screening
American Italian Cancer Foundation
Assemblymember Brennan's District Offices
Wednesday, September 30th
416 7th Avenue • 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
1414 Cortelyou Road • 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Additionally, there will be an **MTA Metrocard Van**, hours are concurrent with the Mobile Mammography Van
If you have any questions, or to schedule an appointment for the mammograms, please telephone Assemblymember Brennan's office at 718 788-7221.

COMMUNITY FARMER'S MARKETS

Bartel-Pritchard Square
Prospect Park West @ 15 Street
Wednesday, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. – YEAR ROUND

Windsor Terrace
PS 154, 11th Avenue between Sherman and Windsor Place
May 10 - December 20th
Sunday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Cortelyou Road
Cortelyou Road between Argyle and Rugby Roads
Sunday, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. YEAR ROUND

Boro Park
14th Avenue between 49th and 50th Streets
July 9th - November 19th
Thursday, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.



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Jim Brennan

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SPRING 2015

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JIM BRENNAN

invites you to join him in
A conversation and a Q&A with

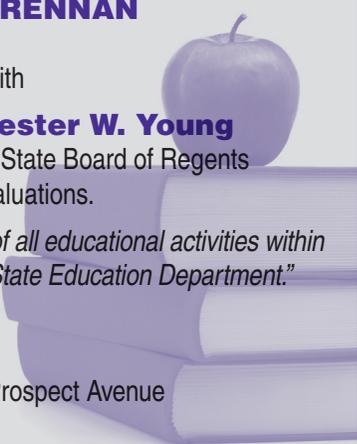
Dr. Kathleen M. Cashin and Dr. Lester W. Young

The two Brooklyn representatives of the New York State Board of Regents to discuss teacher and principal evaluations.

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PS 10**

511 7th Avenue, Between 17th Street and Prospect Avenue
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



Tenant Lobby Day in Albany

**Wednesday, May 27th
Tuesday, June 9th**

Join tenants to strengthen the rent laws

For further information, please telephone the Flatbush Tenants Coalition at 718 635-2623.

