



Assemblymember Jim Brennan

REPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

Fall 2016

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2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Main Achievement:

Historic Labor Benefits: An Increase in the Minimum Wage and Paid Family Leave



Jim Brennan in summer 1992.

At the time of budget adoption, the Legislature and the Governor approved an increase in the minimum wage in New York to \$15 an hour over three years from its current \$9.00 an hour. The **minimum wage** will go to \$11.00 an hour in New York City on January 1, 2017, and there will be a \$2 an hour increase for each of the two following years, to go to \$15.00 an hour by January 1, 2019. For businesses with 10 or fewer employees, the phase-in will be over four years rather than three, so the minimum will rise to \$10.50 on January 1, 2017, and reach \$15.00 by January 1, 2020. In the New York City suburbs and upstate New York there will also be longer phase-ins toward \$15 an hour.

We also enacted a **Paid Family Leave** program. This program would gradually provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave benefits for workers, men and women, who have been employed continuously for 26 weeks or more. The leave can be used to care for an infant, a family member with a serious medical condition or to ease the burden when earners are called to active military service. Benefits will begin in 2018 with 8 weeks and gradually expand to 12 weeks by 2021. The program is self-sustaining and will be funded through a small payroll deduction from each employee.

THE BUDGET

New York City schools received a \$525 million, or 5.7% increase. State aid to the New York City schools has now risen by more than \$1 billion over the past two years. The Assembly also blocked more than \$700 million in budget cuts to the New York City government.

Mass Transit

The Legislature provided a \$2.9 billion appropriation to the M.T.A. capital plan, including \$500 million to assure completion of the next phase of the Second Avenue Subway. These funds were sufficient for the 2015-2019 M.T.A. capital plan to be approved, although right now about \$7 billion out of the \$29 billion plan is merely an I.O.U. from the State government and likely not be paid until past 2019. The State government's support for the M.T.A.'s capital investments has improved, but is still not adequate.

Higher Education

CUNY and SUNY were given modest aid increases and a further tuition increase was blocked.

INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Pension Forfeiture

The Legislature passed a proposed constitutional amendment to allow forfeiture of pensions for corruption by elected officials and other public officers, like state agency commissioners and judges. Under law, for an amendment to the State Constitution to be submitted to the people, it must pass two successively elected houses of the legislature; the proposal passed this year must be passed again next year by the Legislature for submission to the voters in November 2017. If supported by the voters, pension forfeiture would strengthen deterrence of corruption.

Legislative Session continued on page 2

Update on the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE)

Ten years ago, the New York State Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the 1993 CFE lawsuit maintaining that New York State failed to provide adequate funding to public schools. As a result, between 2007-2009 the state dispersed \$2.3 billion through the Foundation Aid formula that determined the state owed \$5.5 billion in aid to all school districts in the state. Allocation of funds was due to continue for two more years but in 2009 the state froze funding citing the fiscal crisis. The state resumed dispersing funds in 2012 but at a much lower level. Today, public schools in New York City are owed a combined \$2.5 billion. A recent report from the "Public Policy and Education Fund" and "Alliance for Quality Education" calculates that the state owes \$2,667 per NYC student, money that would improve the learning environment with smaller classes, more resources in the classroom and other supports for our students.



Assemblymember Brennan speaking on the floor of the NYS Assembly Chamber.

Independent Political Expenditures

The second would strengthen regulation and transparency of independent political action committee spending to prevent coordination between candidates and these entities. The 2010 United States Supreme Court decision, *Citizens Union*, permitted unlimited spending by individuals, corporations, and unions through independent political action committees that would bypass traditional contribution limits on candidates and political parties. Although technically coordination between these entities and candidates remained illegal, enforcement problems, inadequacies in reporting and other issues allowed unscrupulous entities and or candidates to continue coordinating the expenditure of these huge sums of money. New York has strengthened its laws over several years to improve reporting of these expenditures, and this year we passed even stronger measures. Our new law prevents candidates, their families, or former staffers from forming independent spending groups and requires reporting of the identity of anyone exerting control over the group, and tightens the definitions of coordination, a banned practice, to prevent candidates from using these independent groups.

Other Integrity Measures

The Assembly majority passed measures to strengthen integrity in campaign finance and conflicts-of-interest concerns for legislators with outside business interests, but the State Senate took no action on these measures. The first closed the limited liability contribution loophole, which allows individuals to bypass contribution limits by funneling money through limited liability corporations.

A State Board of Elections ruling allowed individuals to contribute up to \$150,000 per LLC to candidates, parties, etc., so that, for instance, large real estate interests could set up dozens of LLCs, one per each building they own, and then have each contribute to those limits. The Assembly has passed bills to close this loophole two years in a row.

Corruption cases involving state legislators frequently involved special interests disguising bribes through payments to legislators outside business interests, law firms, consulting firms, investment firms, etc. Of course, some of the corruption

cases were just outright bribes even where the legislator had no outside business interest. Over the years financial disclosure laws have been strengthened to require more detailed information regarding outside business interests. With limited exceptions, lawmakers who practice law must reporting client information, including the name of the client and the income received. In cases where a lawmaker provides services to a firm, but does not provide services to clients, the lawmaker must describe the services rendered. All disclosure forms filed by state lawmakers are posted on the Joint Commission on Ethics website.

Some good government groups and concerned citizens have called for either abolishing or limiting outside income so that the legislator should work full-time for the public. Clearly there are pros and cons to this concept, but the Assembly passed legislation this year that would restrict outside income. Under the measure, no legislator can earn more in outside income than the base salary of a legislator. In addition, a legislator would specifically be prohibited from using his or her name in promotional materials, unless the legislator performs services for the firm. Once again, the Senate refused to consider the outside income restriction or the other ethics measures that were associated with it.

OTHER LEGISLATION

Improved access to breast cancer screening and reduction in insurance fees

The legislation funds increased awareness and screening programs for breast cancer, including a public awareness campaign, community outreach programs, patient navigators, and mobile mammography vans. The new legislative agreement will:

- Require 210 hospitals and clinics to offer four additional hours of screening per week to help women who have difficulty scheduling mammograms during the 9 to 5 workday.
 - Maimonides Breast Center has expanded its hours, Monday thru Friday, from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. They are also open on alternating Saturdays and Sundays, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Call (718) 765-2520 to schedule an appointment.
 - The Women's Diagnostic Center at NY Methodist Hospital offers extended hours two nights a week (Monday and Tuesday, 5-7 p.m.), in addition to regular hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Their telephone number is 718 780-5029.
- Eliminates annual deductibles, co-payments, and co-insurance payments ("cost-sharing") for all screening mammograms (including those provided to women more frequently than current federal guidelines, such as annual mammograms for women in their forties).
- Current state law requires all public employers to provide their employees with four hours of leave each year for breast cancer screening. Now public employees in New York City will receive that same benefit.

These new laws will make a positive difference in the health of women across the state.

Improved Foreclosure and Abandoned Property Protections

Some years ago, the legislature enacted a mandatory pre-foreclosure conference between homeowners and banks before a court and assurance of legal representation. This new legislation strengthens the processes of these mandatory settlement conferences and creates a consumer bill of rights for homeowners in foreclosure. Another measure imposes a pre-foreclosure duty on banks and loan servicers to maintain abandoned and vacant properties to prevent blight from spreading in the community.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

I am proud of the work my office and staff have performed in service to the residents of the 44th Assembly district. There are 96 Brennan laws on the books of the State of New York (with a few more bills yet to be sent to the Governor). I chaired four standing committees of the New York State Assembly over the 32 years of service. I won three national awards for my work as a State legislator. In the community, timely interventions by my office saved 10 community institutions and programs from collapsing or going out of business, sometimes even more than once, retaining millions of dollars in service to the constituency. They included the Park Slope Senior Center, Prospect Hill Senior Center, the Senior League of Flatbush (relocated to Marien Heim Senior Residence), the M.S. 51 School Health Clinic (twice), the I.S. 88 Mental Health Clinic, Camp Friendship (twice), the Self-Help Kensington Holocaust Survivors Program, the Flatbush Development Corporation and P.S. 217 itself, where I helped block the initiation of a school closure process.

My district offices and staff helped tens of thousands of people and we helped spur community organizing drives that rezoned nearly every neighborhood in the Assembly district to improve the quality of life. A lawsuit I brought on behalf of local residents halted the City government's abuse of the former State Armory and paved the way for its later renovation, and my office contributed along with other local elected officials, to a Windsor Terrace community wide effort to retain a Key Food Supermarket in that neighborhood.

My designation of special safety funding at the Church Avenue F train station spurred an MTA agreement to build an elevator there, and my office designated millions to enhance station safety with security cameras at the 7th Avenue F, the Fort Hamilton Parkway F station, the Q train at Avenue H, and Church Avenue F, as well as a renovation of the plaza at Newkirk Avenue in conjunction with Boro President Marty Markowitz. I am also proud of the many investments in local schools and community organizations and institutions.

I am also proud of the regular and constant community outreach conducted by my staff. Over the years we have organized volunteer, health, job and resource fairs, mammogram screenings, flu shots, MTA Half-fare buses, issue and budget forums, housing and tenants' rights events, to try and help people and keep community residents informed of the issues, their rights and benefits. The list could go on so I will stop here. As my term of office ends on December 31st, 2016, **my two District Offices will officially close at the end of business on Friday, December 23, 2016.** I am grateful for all the support and friendship shown me by thousands of community residents in the neighborhoods of Park Slope, Flatbush, Windsor Terrace, Kensington, Midwood, Boro Park, Sunset Park, and Bay Ridge that I represented through 32 years. I hope to stay in public service and my very best wishes to all, I am



Assemblymember Brennan and his fellow elected officials and union leaders rally to block the closure of Kingsborough Psychiatric Center. (WE WON!)



Assemblymember Brennan, students, staff and parents of I.S. 88 at their Spring Cleanup.



Assemblymember Brennan joined by Assembly colleagues, Robinson, Cohen, at-the-time Councilman Weprin, Lentol, and Borough President Marty Markowitz protesting Governor Pataki's proposed cuts in the state budget.



Shlomy Turner explains to the Assemblymember why his family is concerned about recent changes in parking signage on his block.

Sincerely Yours,

Jim Brennan

Assemblymember Jim Brennan



Assemblymember Brennan and Governor Mario Cuomo at a bill signing.



Assemblymember Brennan at the opening ceremony for 138 units of supportive housing for the mentally ill and frail elderly at the Prospect YMHA (at 9th Street) which he helped fund.



Tom Bauer, Director of Operations Ocean Parkway Community Development Corp. and Assemblymember Brennan visit the CAMBA table at the Assemblymember's Spring Resource Fair.



EARLY DETECTION OF BREAST CANCER SAVES LIVES!

American Italian Cancer
FOUNDATION 

Mobile Care Clinic Will Be in Your Neighborhood!

To Provide No Cost Digital
Mammograms & Clinical Breast Exams

Eligibility:

- Woman aged 40 and older
- Currently living in New York City
- No Mammogram in the past 12 months

No co-pays required and deductibles are waived

Medical Services provided by Multi-Diagnostic Services

Hosted by:

Assemblymember Jim Brennan

Where: 416 7th Avenue between
13th and 14th Streets

When: Thursday, November 17, 2016

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Where: 1414 Cortelyou Road between
Marlborough and Rugby Roads

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

For an Appointment

Call: 1-877-628-9090



Assemblymember

**Jim
Brennan**

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SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Mobile Mammography Reminder

Thursday, November 17, 2016

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at 416 7th Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets

2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. at 1414 Cortelyou Road between Marlborough and Rugby Roads

For an appointment please telephone 1-877-628-9090. Additional details inside.