



Assemblyman

Keith L.T. Wright

Reports to the People

SPRING 2014

GREETINGS, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS!

Spring has finally arrived, and with it, I am happy to report to you on the recently enacted 2014-2015 New York State budget. In this report, you will find highlights of the final agreement concerning education, housing and other important issues.

Education

After several weeks of negotiations, the Legislature and Governor Cuomo agreed to a spending plan that allocates an additional \$1.1 billion in aid to education for a total investment of \$22.3 billion in our schools. Also included in the budget is a “Smart Schools” initiative, a \$2 billion bond act that voters will consider, which will help schools to upgrade their existing technology with high-tech improvements that will help to modernize classrooms across the state.

I am proud to announce that the 2014-2015 enacted budget allocates \$300 million to implement universal pre-kindergarten starting in the 2014 school year and an additional \$300 million for next year. During my twenty years representing the 70th Assembly District, education has always been among my top priorities. We all know how true it is that the investment we make in our chil-

dren’s education will define their futures. Research has shown that the early years are the defining years and it is for that reason early childhood education had the spotlight during this year’s budget negotiations. Thanks to the support of advocates, educators and parents across the state, the fight to secure dollars for early education was successful.

I also feel very strongly that access to higher education is among the most critical social justice issues facing our society today. Without a college degree, the men and women of our city are several times more likely to live and raise their families on poverty-level wages. We also know that poverty has a direct impact on the prevalence of criminal activity, a fact that has been proven

Education (continued on page 2)



Assemblyman Wright debates legislation for tenant protections on the Floor of the Assembly Chamber.



Assemblyman Wright arrested for civil disobedience with members of 1199 32BJ, on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2014, while demanding fair wages and labor standards for workers at LaGuardia and JFK airports.

Education (continued from page 1)

to disproportionately affect communities of color. As a representative for one of the most diverse regions in the state, it is my duty to advocate for the right of every student to attend college not only for their sake, but for the strength of our communities. For this reason, I am a strong supporter of the New York State DREAM Act, which would have allowed undocumented students who meet in-state tuition requirements to access state financial aid and scholarships for higher education. I find it unconscionable that in New York State, which is home to more than 3 million immigrants, there are approximately 146,000 students who were educated in our public schools and are currently ineligible to receive financial aid to attend college. Over the years, countless studies have told us what will happen to those without a college education. They will be shut out of opportunities for economic advancement and continue to slip further into the depths of poverty. Though the State Senate failed to see just how critical this measure is for the next generation of New Yorkers and secure the passage of the DREAM Act, I remain committed to fighting for the rights of every person who seeks the chance to better themselves and their families.

Housing

Our senior citizens are the backbone of our culture and our communities. As we all know, it has only gotten harder over the years to make ends meet and this has become near impossible for those on a fixed income. The rising cost of living and the dire lack of affordable housing in our state has driven many of our seniors to choose between paying rent or buying food, medications and other necessities. The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption program (SCRIE) began in New York City in 1970 as a way to help seniors with limited means remain in affordable housing. The program is designed for residents of rent-controlled and rent-stabilized apartments where residents' rents are frozen at the amount it is when they apply for the program. To be eligible for the program, residents must be at least 62 years old, be named on the lease or rent orders, have the apartment as their primary residence, and spend more than one-third of their monthly household income on rent.

This year's budget increases the household income limit for SCRIE which was previously \$29,000. Under the final agreement, that income limit will be raised to \$50,000 for two years after which time the Legislature would have to vote on whether to make this change permanent. This is a very important step toward my goal to increase the number of beneficiaries of the SCRIE program and will help over 7,000 New York City senior citizens stay in their homes.

This year's enacted budget also makes substantial investments in funding for critical housing support programs, among them the New York State Supportive Housing Program, the Solutions to End Homelessness Program and the Operational Support for AIDS Housing Program. These support programs are the best tool we have available to help those among us who are struggling with life-altering challenges to live happy, healthy and productive lives. Also enacted in the budget was a measure to institute a 30% rent cap for low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS in NYC, a fight which I have led for a number of years, as the bill's prime sponsor in the State Assembly. This will ensure that poor individuals and families living with AIDS/HIV in NYC have their rents capped at no more than 30% of their income, thereby providing affordable and stable housing.



Assemblyman Wright confers with Herman "Denny" Farrell, Jr., Chair of the Assembly Ways & Means Committee, while presiding over a joint budget hearing for the 2014 NYS budget.

New York City Housing Authority and Mitchell-Lama

Following the enactment of my bill to overhaul the governing board and rein in executive compensation, Mayor de Blasio appointed Harlem resident, Ms. Shola Olatoye, a longtime affordable housing advocate, to chair the troubled New York City Housing Authority. NYCHA has a long road ahead following a turbulent year that was wrought with resident frustration and misguided leadership. Last month, I had the pleasure of introducing the new Chairwoman during a special meeting of the Housing Committee in Albany where she shared the new administration's exciting plans for the future of the agency. I am more confident than ever that we are on the right path to rebuilding resident confidence and trust in leadership.

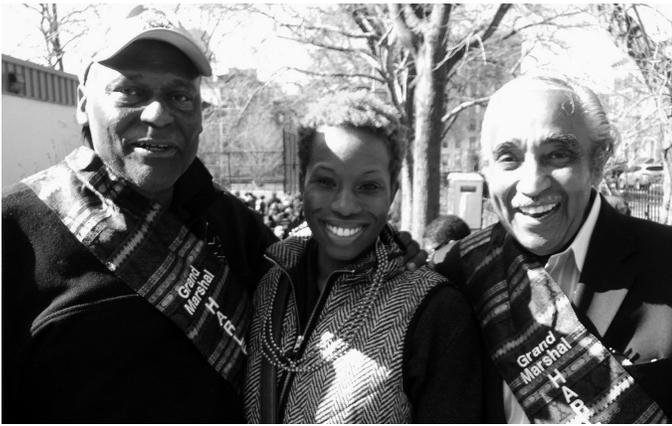
In recent months, there has been significant news coverage concerning the spike in crime at New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. To address this issue, I was successful in securing the restoration of \$742,000 in funding for NYCHA's Tenant Watch Program because no one should have to go to bed at night fearing for their safety in their own home. For over forty years, Tenant Watch has encouraged residents to volunteer their time to improving safety in their developments. Now, resident volunteers can receive specific training developed by NYCHA in conjunction with the New York Police Department on best practices for providing the safest and most effective watch services possible.

As Chair of the Housing Committee in the State Assembly and lifelong resident of Harlem, I am all too familiar with the gravity of the affordable housing crisis that continues to have devastating impacts on our city.

It is becoming more and more challenging for working class families to find homes that are safe and within their range of affordability. With the prospect of home ownership too far out of reach for the vast majority of residents and the cost of rent reaching record highs across the five boroughs, the situation is dire. Competing with larger than ever market rates, an aging portfolio of Mitchell-Lama housing and very limited space for new development, the task of finding a long-term, sustainable solution for the population will be tough, but I look forward to partnering with Mayor de Blasio, who has committed to build or preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing over the next ten years. Together, I believe we can, and will reach this goal.



Assemblyman Wright joins Rory Whelan of Time Warner Cable for the grand opening of the Ali Forney Center's Time Warner Cable Learning Lab.



Assemblyman Wright joined by Shola Olatoye, Chair of the New York City Housing Authority and fellow Harlem Little League Grand Marshal, Rep. Charles Rangel.



Assemblyman Wright is honored at Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc. (HCCI) 12th Annual Gala, "Let Us Break Bread Together" on April 26, 2014.



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the People*

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THANK YOU, FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

With over 128,000 residents in the 70th A.D., I am profoundly grateful to the tenant associations and community organizations who work tirelessly day in and day out to keep me abreast of the

issues facing my Harlem community. Without your dedication to being a voice for the scores of tenants who are constantly grappling with negligent landlords, unscrupulous management

agencies and so many other obstacles, the state of affairs would be far less encouraging. Thank you for your commitment to preserving the rich heritage of our beloved Harlem.

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