



# Legislative Update

from Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee

2013-2014

Dear Neighbors,

Please accept my thanks for allowing me to represent you, once again, in Albany. I am pleased to report that during the 2013 session we passed a budget and legislation that cut taxes for middle-class families and small businesses, created jobs, and boosted our local economy. We successfully restored funding to protect our most vulnerable citizens, raised the minimum wage and fought hard to guarantee equal rights for women, a fight that I pledge to continue.

This newsletter provides more detailed information about what we accomplished during the 2013 legislative session. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and concerns. Phone me at 845-624-4601 or email me at [jaffee@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:jaffee@assembly.state.ny.us).

I hope you are enjoying the summer. Best wishes for a happy and safe Labor Day Holiday.

Warmest regards,

Ellen C. Jaffee  
NYS Assemblymember, 97th District

## Assemblywoman Jaffee sponsors hikes in minimum wage and unemployment benefits

The 2013-14 state budget increases the state's minimum wage to \$9.00 per hour by 2016. Assemblywoman Jaffee, who sponsored the bill, said, "The thousands of working families who depend on a minimum wage will have a little more money in their pockets to spend locally, jump-starting consumer spending and helping to spur the economy. I agree with more than 80 percent of all New Yorkers who support increasing the minimum wage." Nine hundred thousand New Yorkers will benefit.

Additionally, a graduated increase in unemployment benefits will provide some assistance to those who are out of work or underemployed. The current maximum unemployment weekly benefit of \$405 will increase to \$420 in 2014. A schedule establishes regular increases until the benefit reaches \$450 in 2018. The maximum benefit will be adjusted until 2026 when it will reach 50% of the average weekly wage.

## Assemblywoman Jaffee helped restore \$90 million in funds to people with disabilities

Thanks to the efforts of Assemblywoman Jaffee and her Assembly colleagues, up to \$90 million will be restored to the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) in order to fund the non-profits that provide life-changing services for those with developmental disabilities.

Jill Warner, CEO of Jawonio, said, "For the thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities and their families, we thank Ellen Jaffee for her efforts. She kept the pressure on to ensure the passage of this legislation."



Back row: Angela Neal, Jawonio Advocacy Group member, Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee, Claude Neva, staff, Joe Borno, JAG member, David Musson, Coordinator, JAG. Seated front row: Scott Salmon, Advocacy Coach and Ramon Rivera (JAG group member).

### ASSEMBLYWOMAN ELLEN JAFFEE

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# Assemblywoman Jaffee's bills pass both houses and await Governor's signature

## Making dangerous over-the-counter drugs illegal for teens

Cough and cold medicine are safe for most people, but growing numbers of teens are abusing those products that contain dextromethorphan (DXM), a non-narcotic cough suppressant used in more than 100 cough and cold medicines. These include Robitussin, Sudafed, Tylenol, Nyquil, as well as generic products. Taken in large quantities, DXM can cause hallucinations, brain damage, seizures and even death. Excessive use of DXM to get high is commonly called robotripping.

Assemblywoman Jaffee's bill (A.933-B/S.696-B), co-sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Mark Grisanti, (R-Buffalo) prohibits stores from selling any products containing DXM to persons under the age of 18 without a prescription. The bill requires proof of legal age to purchase these products. Any retail establishment found in violation will be fined \$250.

## Governor signs Jaffee bill banning secondhand smoke on hospital grounds and nursing homes into law

The dangers of secondhand smoke are well-documented. Jaffee's bill (A.1115-A/S.1987-A), co-sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Jack Martins (R-Mineola), prohibits smoking on hospital and nursing home grounds throughout New York State and within 15 feet of the facilities' property lines. The law will protect everyone who comes to hospitals and nursing homes—patients, staff, and visitors.

**Did you know?** Second-hand smoke lingers in the air hours after cigarettes have been extinguished, causing or aggravating a wide range of health problems. It can trigger asthma episodes and increases the risk of heart attack. Secondhand smoke exposure is responsible for 2,500 deaths a year in New York State.

## Highlights from the 2013 Legislative Session: Jaffee Votes for Safer Communities

### Jaffee sponsors anti-texting bill to save lives; Governor signs into law

A bill (A.7739/S.5656) signed into law by Governor Cuomo enforces tough penalties for young and new drivers who are caught texting while driving. Distracted drivers cause one in five crashes in our state.

### Heads up for all drivers: New penalties for cell phone and texting violations

- Driver violation points increased from 3 to 5 points for Probationary and Junior Drivers, Class DJ or Class MJ
- 1st offense mandatory 60-day license or permit suspension for Probationary and Junior Drivers, Class DJ or MJ
- A second offense within 6 months of the first:
  - Probationary License revoked for at least 6 months
  - Class DJ or MJ License or Learner Permit revoked for at least 60 days

#### New minimum fines and increased maximum fines:

- 1st offense minimum \$50 and maximum \$150
- 2nd offense within 18 months: minimum \$50, maximum \$200
- 3rd or subsequent offense within 18 months: minimum \$50, maximum \$400

For more new rules go to <http://www.dmv.ny.gov/cellphone.htm> or contact our office at 845-624-4601.

**It is illegal in New York State to hold a mobile phone in your hand or send a text or an email while you are driving in New York State except to call 911 or medical, fire or police in an emergency.**

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## Jaffee bill gives BOCES reserve funds for needed repairs

Putting off necessary repairs due to lack of funds ends up costing Rockland taxpayers more in the long run. Jaffee's bill (A.6435/S.5137), co-sponsored in the Senate by Sen. John Flanagan (R-Islip), improves school environments for students, teachers, and staff, by providing BOCES with a reserve fund that will allow for timely repairs that were not anticipated and not budgeted for.

"This bill is important to the Rockland BOCES, as well as to all the other 36 BOCES because it will help districts plan for emergency repairs in a timely and cost-effective manner," said Mary Jean Marsico, District Superintendent of Schools, Rockland BOCES.

## Jaffee's Breast Density Inform Law in effect

In January 2013, Ellen Jaffee's landmark 2012 legislation made New York one of the first states to require that women be informed in clear language if their breasts are dense. Density can hide cancers on a mammogram and may increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. The law seeks to provide a woman with this medical finding and to encourage a follow-up conversation with her doctor about supplemental screening. New York's Breast Density Inform Law, the most comprehensive in the nation, serves as a template to other states as they draft similar legislation. To date, the women of VA, HI, CA, TN and AL will receive density notification based on language developed by Jaffee and Senator John Flanagan (R-Islip) in New York.



*Assemblywoman Jaffee in Albany with East Ramapo Central School District students and "Save Our School" advocates.*

## Jaffee gets SED oversight in lottery "spin-up" bill for East Ramapo Schools

To help East Ramapo schools minimize already devastating cuts to programs, the lottery "spin-up" bill, (A.7514/S.5057-A), co-sponsored in the Senate by Sen. David Carlucci, will provide \$3.5 million in aid to the East Ramapo Central School District by advancing the revenue from New York State Lottery that the school district receives each year. The district pays back the sum over 30 years, by subtracting from the amount of future lottery payments to the district. It works in increments, and there is no interest.

"I am hopeful that the funds from my lottery spin-up legislation will restore some of the instructional services and extracurricular activities that have been cut from the East Ramapo Schools," said Jaffee. "I included a requirement for an oversight committee to ensure that these funds will improve the education for East Ramapo students. This bill is but one measure. I will continue to advocate for increased funding for East Ramapo and for state oversight."

## Assemblywoman Jaffee chairs Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy

Earlier this year, at the Nyack Winter Farmers' Market, Assemblywoman Jaffee announced her appointment as Chair of the New York State Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy.

"The public has embraced this concept that we need to go back to the old way of doing things," said Nyack Mayor Jen Laird-White, who introduced Jaffee. "We need local farms to flourish."

Assemblywoman Jaffee's agenda as Task Force Chair includes:

- developing programs to improve nutrition and health, especially among children and the underserved;
- supporting the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Programs (HPNAP) that supply food pantries;
- expanding meal programs for seniors to help maintain health and reduce nursing home stays;
- promoting New York farm products; and
- making it easier to farm in suburban areas, so consumers have access to farm fresh food.

"I'm so fortunate to be joined by food and farm advocates in Rockland who have been national leaders in creating innovative ways to access fresh food. We are especially lucky to have Joan Gussow, a pioneer of the eat local, think global movement, who lives right here in Rockland."



*Assemblywoman Jaffee at Nyack Farmers' Market Opening Day ribbon-cutting with Nyack Mayor Jen Laird-White; Marie Lorenzini, Village of Nyack Trustee; South Nyack Mayor Bonnie Christian; Orangetown Supervisor Andy Stewart; Nyack Chamber of Commerce President Scott Baird; Market Manager Pam Moskowitz; Market Co-Directors, David Collins and Carlo Pellegrini; and Paul Curley, Nyack Chamber of Commerce. Photo credit: Dr. Arnold Roufa*

## Assemblywoman Jaffee holds Assembly Roundtable on farming in suburban communities: introduces bill to promote small farms

Inspired by Rockland farmers who have been trying for years to remove barriers to farming in suburban communities, Assemblywoman Jaffee hosted a policy forum to find out how to make it easier to grow food in areas like Rockland County.

Jaffee said, "Sales of locally grown products from farm stands and farmers' markets boost our local economies. What's more, reducing the miles our food travels means fewer trucks, less dependence on fossil fuels and fresher food."



*Linda Concklin Hill, Rockland Farm Bureau President and long-time advocate for a Rockland ag district. Not pictured: Allan Beers, Rockland County Coordinator, Environmental Resources.*

Based on the roundtable discussion, Jaffee introduced a bill (A.8026) to help local food producers qualify for certain incentives and protections. The bill addresses the demand for local food by consumers, restaurants and schools. This legislation aims to preserve and restore farmland, which has been threatened by development pressure, high land prices, and dense population.

## Ellen Jaffee fights for Rockland in 2013 State Budget

This year's third, consecutive on-time budget puts more money in the pockets of New Yorkers.

### Middle-class tax relief

- Extends the middle-class personal income tax cut for three more years—at the lowest rate in 60 years.
- Increases the STAR property tax relief program to \$3.4 billion in total funding, the highest level ever.
- Reduces energy taxes and saves customers a total \$500 million statewide by fiscal year 2017.
- Sets up a permanent Financial Restructuring Board to help our towns and villages restructure their finances, cut costs and achieve other savings that will benefit Rockland taxpayers.

### Investing in our students

- Increases funding for public schools in the 97th Assembly District by nearly \$6 million, more than a 5 percent increase over last year.
- Includes \$25 million statewide for full-day and half-day pre-kindergarten grants to allow for more full-day and pre-K programs across the state and additional half-day, pre-K slots.
- Boosts aid by \$150 for each student, called "Full Time Equivalent" (FTE) students at SUNY community colleges like RCC.
- Supports our local libraries — over recent years, our libraries have become info centers for a host of services from job searches to filing tax returns.

### Economic development and savings for small businesses

- Creates a tax credit for businesses that hire veterans and helps those who served our country find good jobs when they complete their military service.
- Saves businesses \$446.5 million annually by reforming the Workers' Compensation program and Unemployment Insurance system.
- Provides high-tech jobs by assisting the start-up and growth of new businesses and technology companies.

## Jaffee sponsors Fair Elections Act to fight corruption

A sweeping election reform bill (A.4980-C) takes a big step toward campaign finance restrictions in New York State. Advocacy organizations like Common Cause support the bill, which prevents larger donors from having too much influence on who gets elected. Those in violation of the proposed law must pay up to \$20,000 in fines.

"Elections based on public financing, lower contribution limits, and stronger disclosure rules will dramatically reduce the role of lobbyists and wealthy special interests while rebuilding the public trust in government," Jaffee said, adding, "We have a long way to go."

The bill passed the Assembly but is still in committee in the Senate.

## JAFFEE FIGHTS FOR FAIRNESS: Women's 10-Point Equality Act (WEA) passes Assembly

The Assembly passed all 10 points of Governor Cuomo's Women's Equality Act to ensure equal rights for New York women. The bill (A.8070) contains 10 points to bring fairness to the women of New York, which include strengthening a woman's right to health care, combating sexual harassment, increasing protections for victims of domestic violence and imposing stronger penalties for human trafficking.

A major piece of the Women's Equality Act is equal pay for women. "When more than one million households in New York State are headed by women often struggling to make ends meet, income equality is a matter of survival," Jaffee said.

According to several major polls, two out of three New Yorkers favor passage of the entire 10-point act. "Even though the Senate did not vote on the full Women's Equality Act I am committed to getting this passed in the coming months."



**Concerned Citizens of Suffern: Claudia Inoa, Roy Tschudy and Bruce McClintock with Assemblywoman Jaffee. CCS has been in the forefront of flood awareness and prevention.**

**Highlights from the 2013 Legislative Session**  
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### Jaffee sponsors Repeat Child Abuse Offenders Act

The Repeat Child Abuse Offenders Act, (A.2623-A; S.5869) protects children by making it more difficult for adults who hurt children in New York to get away with their crimes.

### NY SAFE Law tackles serious public health and safety problems

Ellen Jaffee co-sponsored the New York State SAFE Act, which Governor Cuomo signed into law on January 15th. These gun safety measures, including background checks, an assault weapons ban, and mental health screenings for those who seek to purchase guns are designed to protect our communities and to avoid future tragedies like the massacre at Sandy Hook or the murders of first responders in Webster, NY.

### Jaffee Appointed to Tappan Zee Mass Transit Task Force

"Our mission is to improve transit options for Rockland and Westchester along the I-287 corridor. The Task Force will consider short-term, medium and long range mass transit goals. This provides a much needed regional overview of our mass transit needs. I am encouraged that the state has been listening to the needs of our communities, and I am hopeful we can improve our transit options."



**Assemblywoman Jaffee and interns Lizzi Ginsberg and Allison Alcena join Congresswoman Nita Lowey at her announcement of superstorm Sandy relief funding.**

## Business Assistance Program for Minority/Women Business Enterprises

*Don't miss out...Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee has organized valuable and informative workshops for those who have been actively in business for at least one year. Find out how to grow your business by selling to the government.*

**SESSION I: September 19th, 2013 • 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**  
**Suffern Library ~ 210 Lafayette Avenue, Suffern**

**HOW AND WHY TO GET NYS MWBE**  
(Minority/Women Business Entity) CERTIFIED

Attendees will find out:

- What is MWBE Certification
- The Benefits
- The Process
- How to Maximize the Certification
- Resources
- Prerequisite to this session is that businesses must be actively in business for at least one year.

**SESSION II: November 21st, 2013 • 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**  
**Finkelstein Library ~ 24 Chestnut Street, Spring Valley**

**GOING OVER THE NYS MWBE APPLICATION**  
**QUESTION-BY-QUESTION**

This is an opportunity to complete the on-line application.

Bring your own laptop or work on one of the library's computers.

- Get questions answered
- Get help with any application obstacles
- Get it done
- Space is limited. Pre-registration is a must!