



Legislative Update

from Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee

SUMMER 2016

Dear Friends,

With water issues in the news and on our minds, I am pleased to report that the 2016-17 State Budget invests a record level of funding in clean water to help our communities upgrade and maintain their drinking and wastewater infrastructure, which is so critical to protecting public health, the environment and our quality of life.

Working to ensure we have a safe, sustainable and affordable long-term water supply has always been a priority of mine. As a County Legislator, I passed a law mandating the testing of private wells when property in Rockland was transferred or sold. Two-thirds of the wells tested had primary or secondary failures, highlighting the need for mandatory testing statewide. To alert the thousands of New Yorkers with private wells that the water in their homes could be below state standards and even contaminated, I have introduced The Private Well Testing Act (A.2295) in the Assembly and will continue to press for its passage.

I have also introduced The Well Water and Water Supply Education Act (A.804), which will provide the public with educational materials containing key facts about potential contaminants that can cause short- and long-term illness, and advise homeowners that well water should be tested regularly by a certified lab.

The Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee, which I sit on, will be holding public hearings on the state's water quality in early September. When those important dates are announced, I will let you know.

This newsletter provides more in-depth information about my legislative priorities and what we have accomplished as a community working together.

If you would like additional information on topics in this newsletter, or to sign up for my e-news, please visit my Assembly website: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Ellen-Jaffee>, phone my office at 845-624-4601, or email me at jaffee@nyassembly.gov. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and concerns.

Best wishes,

Ellen C. Jaffee

Ellen C. Jaffee
NYS Assemblymember, 97th District

New Suez Rate Case: Water Conservation, Concerns and Opportunities

Suez Water New York, formerly United Water, has filed a new rate case before the NYS Public Service Commission (PSC) that will determine not only rate increases but also water policy. This case follows a decision by the PSC, rejecting the controversial Suez desalination proposal and directing the company to instead develop plans for water conservation and leaks repair.

I have notified the PSC about my concerns with the request by Suez for a substantial rate hike, about 18.7% for single-family homes. I have also expressed my opposition to the company's proposal to charge Rockland ratepayers for the planning costs Suez incurred for its failed desalination proposal, \$54.5 million, or \$88-\$100 million with interest over 20 years. At the same time, the company's plans for water conservation and leaks repair - while a step in the right direction - are not strong enough and in fact comply only with the bare minimum required by the PSC. I have called on the PSC to ensure that the full potential of conservation and repair of leaks are maximized, since water conservation is *always* the most cost-effective solution.

I am proud that I spearheaded the effort to secure \$250,000 in state funding for a water conservation plan for the Rockland County Water Task Force. Now we need to ensure that Suez will be a strong partner, returning to work collaboratively with the Task Force. This case is an opportunity for Rockland County to create a model for financially and environmentally sustainable water planning throughout the state. We must all be mindful of conserving our precious water resources and controlling development.



Read more about \$3 million in additional state aid for East Ramapo public school students on page 2.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ELLEN C. JAFFEE

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\$3 Million with Oversight for East Ramapo Public Schools

After working together with the advocates, parents, my colleagues and the State Education Department, I am pleased that legislation I sponsored will provide \$3 million in additional reimbursable aid to the district to restore and enhance educational opportunities for public school students. It establishes a framework of operational and fiscal assistance, as well as oversight by the Commissioner of Education and up to three monitors who will assist the district in developing the newly required strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan, and comprehensive expenditure plan. This legislation, supported by the school board, is a significant step forward in providing a long-term solution that addresses the unique needs of the district. It will serve as a bridge, fostering a positive environment, enhancing collaboration and restoring the trust we need to continue the work ahead of us, but it is just a beginning. Much more work must be done. I will continue to be a strong advocate for additional aid with oversight next year.

Nutritious Summer Meals for East Ramapo Children

As a member of the Assembly Children and Families Committee and the Assembly Health Committee, I have been determined to ensure that all children, especially those who are underserved, have access to healthy, nutritious meals that are essential for their physical and educational growth and well-being. I am glad I was able to work together with the State Education Department and the East Ramapo School District to expand the district's Summer Meals Program at six sites located within housing complexes and summer camps. The sites include Martin Luther King Multi-Purpose Center, St. Joseph Summer Program, Gesner Gardens, Spring Valley Housing Authority, Elmwood and Summit Park Elementary, and First Timothy Christian Church. Without that effort some of our most vulnerable children in the community would go without breakfast and lunch because a parent or primary caretaker would not be able to afford the cost of providing breakfast and preparing a bag lunch for their children. A special thank you to New York State Education Commissioner, MaryEllen Elia; NY State Regent, Judith Johnson; East Ramapo Superintendent, Dr. Deborah L. Wortham; and Assistant Superintendent for Finance for East Ramapo, Valter Paci.

Did you know:

I want to make sure all families know about the federally assisted National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. These programs provide nutritionally balanced, reduced-price (\$.25) or free meals to children and teens up to 18 whose parent or primary caregiver is a NY State resident and meets certain income requirements. These meals are available each school day and throughout the summer when school is not in session. To apply, contact your school district. Information about family size, income and sources of income are required. Applications are confidential.



Saving Taxpayer Dollars on School Tax Bills

Thousands of our taxpayers are burdened by the high cost towns charge them to collect school taxes. That's why I sponsored legislation (A.6823) that would give school districts for the first time the power to choose what method of tax collection is most cost-effective, fiscally responsible and efficient, helping taxpayers save money on their school tax bills.

Under current law, school districts are not permitted to collect their own school taxes, which instead is done by the local towns. Towns are permitted to charge property owners in their local school districts a collection fee of up to 1 percent of the taxes collected during the first 30 days and a 5 percent fee after 30 days.

Only property owners in three districts are charged the full 1 percent by the local town: East Ramapo (estimated \$1.2 million), Ramapo (estimated \$850,000) and North Rockland (estimated \$1.3 million), while the majority of property owners elsewhere in New York State are not charged any tax collection fee, or if they are, it's nominal. None of the collection fees charged by the towns go to the local school districts but are retained completely by the towns.

This legislation, which is supported by the NYS School Boards Association, and which will save money for our taxpayers, awaits the Governor's signature and will be effective immediately.

Preserving Property Values, Maintaining Community Character

Buying a home is one of the most significant investments we make in a lifetime. I have been working with my colleagues, community members and groups to institute "No Knocking" laws and discussing ways to enforce our zoning codes to protect the investment that many hardworking families have made in their communities and Rockland County.

Over the last few months, my office has received numerous complaints from constituents about intense and repeated solicitations to sell their properties. In addition, I have listened to concerns regarding a lack of zoning code enforcement that raise serious health and safety issues. I am gathering evidence and testimony to support our efforts. If you would like to share your experiences, have videos or other evidence, please contact my office.

Paid Family Leave Now Law

Working families should never have to choose between caring for a newborn, an aging parent or a seriously ill loved one and a paycheck. When we put families' needs first, we are increasing fairness and keeping our priorities in order. The Paid Family Leave bill (A3870-A) I co-sponsored was signed into law, providing New York's working families with the most extensive leave benefits in the nation: 12 weeks of job-protecting leave funded through a minor employee contribution with no cost to our businesses - large or small.

Childcare Sleep Subsidy

The Assembly passed legislation (A775-B) I sponsored, requiring that when a parent with a young child works the night shift, and is otherwise eligible to receive a child-care subsidy, the local social services district must authorize a subsidy so that the parent can sleep. This legislation will assure that low-income parents who work the night shift and need child care for their young children in order to get adequate sleep will be able to do so regardless of where they live. It will also protect child safety, parental health and help maintain employment by allowing parents to work overnight shifts without serious health and safety consequences. The Senate did not bring this legislation to the floor for a vote.

As a strong advocate for high-quality, affordable childcare and the importance of early learning in closing the achievement gap, it was such a pleasure to be with the children at the Kidsnet pre-school graduation and to see their excitement and growth. I am committed to ensuring all children have access to such wonderful early learning programs.





Safe Staffing for Quality Patient Care

I am a co-sponsor of the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act (A08580-A) that recently passed the Assembly. Research has consistently demonstrated that when nurses are assigned more patients than they can adequately care for, those patients - our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors - are at greater risk of death, infection, complications, falls and re-admission to the hospital. Nurses are the key to improving patient outcomes. Safe staffing is a public health and safety issue we cannot, in good conscience, ignore. Now is the time for the Senate to act. Patients in New York State hospitals and nursing homes, their families and our dedicated nurses deserve nothing less.



Visiting with seniors at Esther Gitlow Towers, Rockland County Jewish Home for the Aged.



Welcoming Jeffrey and Cynthia Fountain and grandson, Malachi, to Albany with the Kinship Navigator, an information, referral and advocacy program that assists grandparents, other relatives or family friends providing full care to a child who is not biologically their own.



BOCES Project Search Graduation

Congratulations to the 40 graduates, their families and to the dedicated professionals at Rockland BOCES, Good Samaritan Hospital and the Rockland County Association for Learning Disabilities (RCALD) who have recognized and supported these students' abilities, talents, strengths and skills. Students in this unique program gain job skills and internship opportunities that prepare them for a variety of opportunities to work, learn and discover fulfilling careers.



Mental Health Awareness Month

In May, I stood with elected officials and advocates to support individuals and families affected by mental illness, raise awareness, and address the stigma associated with mental illness. Thanks to all our providers and organizations in Rockland who do so much.

Protecting Access to Reproductive Health Services

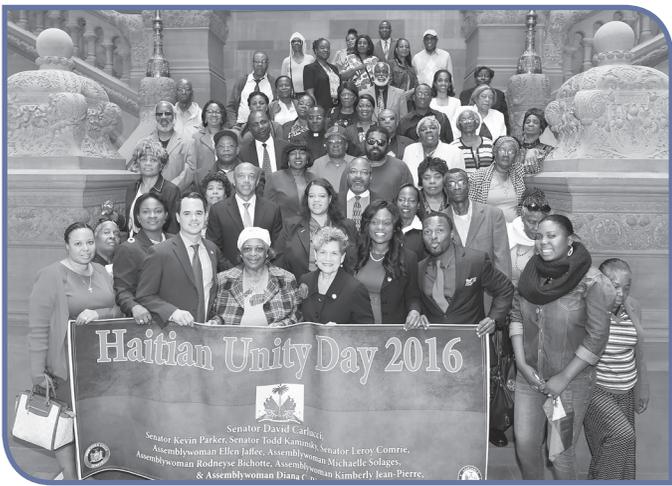
Women will never be truly equal until they have complete control over their health care decisions. The Boss Bill (A.1142-A) I sponsored prohibits discriminating against employees because of their reproductive health care decisions. A second bill (A.6221) I co-sponsored codifies the federal protections of Roe v. Wade into New York State law, ensuring a woman's right to choose. The recent Supreme Court decision upholding the rights guaranteed in Roe v. Wade will bring greater health care equality to women. The Assembly Majority will continue to stand up for access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare and full equality for women.



Veterans Recognition Day • *It was an honor to welcome to the Assembly Chamber Navy veteran Maureen Morgan of Pomona, the first female Commander of the Rockland County American Legion, who has been working to make her organization more accessible to women as well as to younger veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq.*

Stripping Public Official's Pensions

I co-sponsored (A.7704) and the Assembly passed a resolution to amend the New York State Constitution that would strip the pensions of public officials convicted of a felony related to their official duties. Politicians who betray the public trust and use their office to line their own pockets should not be rewarded with pension benefits paid for by taxpayers. This resolution passed in both chambers. For this amendment to become law, it must pass in both chambers again next legislative session. At that point, it will be placed on the ballot as a public referendum for voters to amend the New York State Constitution.



Haitian Unity Day · For the seventh consecutive year, we introduced the Haitian Unity Day Resolution in Albany, dedicating May 23rd as Haitian Unity Day in NY State and commemorating Haiti's legacy of liberty, justice and the significant contributions of Haitians in New York State.



Hillburn School Historic Site · Commemorating the listing of the Hillburn School on the National and State Register of Historic Places, as well as the courageous parents and students of Hillburn, NY, who were aided by Thurgood Marshall in their fight to integrate Hillburn schools.



Suffern Farmers' Market · Celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Suffern Farmers' Market with "founding mothers" Sarah Mondale and Debra Ballestra, the Board and all those who work to make it happen.



NYS Flag Presentation · I presented the New York State Flag to Blauvelt Lions Club and President, Victoria Hardy. It's fitting that the new flag will fly in Lions Town Memorial Park, a park that honors our brave men and women who sacrificed their lives for our freedom.



Water Conservation · I held a press conference at the Orangeburg Library rain garden to announce securing \$250,000 in the State Budget for the Rockland Water Task Force to develop a conservation plan. Water conservation is essential if we wish to avoid building expensive water sources that would also increase the cost of water for residents and businesses. Landscaping options, like rain gardens, save water and can enhance your property.



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"Hudson River HealthCare is deeply grateful to Assemblywoman Jaffee for her support for two patient transportation vans for the Health Center. HRHCare's community health centers in Nyack, Spring Valley and Haverstraw serve 10,000 predominantly low-income Rockland residents, many of whom have significant challenges to overcome in order to access care. These jitneys will provide the essential, and free, transportation services for patients having a difficult time getting to the health center."

~ Anne Nolon, MPH, HRHCare President and CEO



Patient Transportation Van

Capitol Project Funding: Nonprofits and municipalities may be nominated for State and Municipal Facilities program funds, which can be used for the acquisition of certain types of vehicles.