



# Assemblyman James Skoufis

## Reports to the people, Summer 2013

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## Assemblyman James Skoufis

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*Assemblyman Skoufis speaks in support of additional school funding.*

### Assemblyman James Skoufis is working for us

Highlighting a productive first legislative session, Assemblyman James Skoufis **helped pass the 2013-14 state budget without any new taxes or fees, while closing a \$1.4 billion deficit.** The budget gives hardworking families and small businesses relief as our economy continues to recover, and will help Orange and Rockland counties move in the right direction.

Included in the budget was a raise in the minimum wage to \$9 per hour by 2016. This will benefit 925,000 New Yorkers and was one of Skoufis’ top priorities.

Another valuable piece of the state budget was the **3-year extension of the lowest middle-class tax rate in 60 years.** Approximately 4.4 million taxpayers, more than 99

percent of those filing statewide, benefited from \$690 million in tax relief stemming from the tax restructuring. Providing tax cuts to the middle class allows workers to keep more of their hard-earned money. It has the added bonus of boosting our local economy, because with more expendable income comes the increased likelihood of spending those dollars close to home.

This year also included an **increase in state aid to education by \$15.4 million in Orange County.** We owe it to our children to give them the brightest futures and best opportunities we can. With the additional aid provided in this year’s budget, we’re able to keep our schools competitive and prepare children for the careers of the future, all while providing much-needed relief to homeowners.

# Working toward a better NY



## START-UP NY

Public-private partnerships will boost our economy, fostering an environment where businesses will be jumping at the prospect of creating jobs here. Assemblyman Skoufis helped create tax-free zones near SUNY Orange, Rockland Community College and Mount St. Mary's College. Participating companies will help spur growth in the local economy, while providing an incentive for recent graduates and other young professionals to stay in or relocate to the area long term.

## Creating jobs and improving local roads and bridges

Making repairs to get our roads, bridges and highways back in top condition is extremely important, especially in light of the major storms we've had in the Hudson Valley. It's a matter of safety and, in certain areas, it's long overdue. The state budget includes vital funding for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs). **The funding increase is the first in five years.**

- **Orange County will see an increase of 21 percent, for a total of \$7.6 million**

## Tax incentives to hire veterans

Veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and we owe it to them to ensure there are employment opportunities available when they finish their service. That's why this year's budget created a tax credit for businesses that hire qualified veterans. Businesses will receive a credit worth 10 percent of the wages paid to a qualified veteran during the first full year of employment or 15 percent of the wages if the veteran is disabled. Veterans deserve to come home to good-paying, reliable jobs.

## Making NY more business friendly

This legislative session, Assemblyman Skoufis helped lower costs on businesses operating in New York State. Reducing the state's high energy taxes, Assemblyman Skoufis helped eliminate a utility tax surcharge that will save utility customers \$500 million by fiscal year 2017-18. In addition, he helped reduce taxes on manufacturing to 2.4 percent.

## Restoring funding for people with developmental disabilities

Due to a dispute with the federal government earlier this year, New York State had been ordered to pay back \$1.1 billion in "overpayments" for services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Fortunately, through negotiations with the federal government, we were able to reduce that "claw back" by more than half to \$500 million and were allowed to spread out the burden so that Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) service providers didn't carry that financial burden alone. Unfortunately, as a result of the heavy fines, OPWDD saw a significant reduction in funding in the state budget.

It was critical that the legislature work together to restore this funding to ensure that the individuals who rely on OPWDD have access to the vital services they depend on. That's why James fought tooth and nail to ensure the state restored the funding needed to continue to provide these valuable services. In June, the Legislature unanimously passed the measure to do so, marking a major victory for countless families across New York State.

# District news



*Assemblyman Skoufis holds annual West Point Day at the Capitol.*

## Expanding the Shawangunk East Wine Trail

New wineries and vineyards are planting their roots here in the Hudson Valley. The Shawangunk East Wine Trail helped Hudson Valley wineries attract wine enthusiasts and customers from across the country.

Assemblyman Skoufis passed legislation to expand a portion of the state highway system designated as the Shawangunk East Wine Trail to include new wineries. The expansion would enlarge the trail to incorporate bigger portions of the state routes already included, allowing new wineries to participate in wine tours.

## Skoufis helps provide hurricane relief for Orange County

With the ramifications of Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy still being felt in Orange County, Assemblyman Skoufis made it a priority to pass legislation that would ensure flood insurance claims are dealt with more efficiently during natural disasters. Two bills Skoufis authored were part of a larger package of reform bills introduced in the wake of Superstorm Sandy.

The comprehensive insurance reform package not only streamlines the insurance claim process, but also establishes a homeowner's bill of rights and ensures more transparency.

Assemblyman Skoufis knows families and businesses affected by these catastrophic storms can't wait around for insurance companies to get back to them. This legislation fixes this unjustifiable problem and ensures that insurance companies respond to claims in a timely and efficient manner.

## Skoufis opposes Woodbury Common tax breaks

Assemblyman Skoufis has spoken out against another tax break for Woodbury Common. Property tax breaks for the Indiana-based, billion-dollar corporation, Simon Property Group (SPG), which owns Woodbury Common, would mean millions of dollars lost for our schools, municipalities, libraries, police and fire services – a difference that will need to be made up at the expense of our hardworking families and small businesses.

Some members of the Orange County IDA – the board that will ultimately decide on the matter – are adamantly opposed to SPG's potential property tax break. They should be commended. This proposal would put an undue burden on our families.

“Forcing taxpayers to shoulder yet another break for big corporations can't and won't be tolerated.”

– **Assemblyman James Skoufis**

# Making state government more accessible to you

## My door is always open...

The new office is more visitor-friendly and centralized within the district so that members of the community have easy access to visit and seek assistance.

**Skoufis' office is conveniently located at 11 Main St. in downtown, historic Chester.**

Assemblyman Skoufis believes it is important for him to be accessible to all. That's why James will continue to host events around the district to ensure that he is always available to each and every constituent.

"I'm dedicated to serving our community and ensuring we all get ahead. Together, we're building a better New York."

**– Assemblyman James Skoufis**

## Introducing 'Skoufis On Your Street'

Assemblyman Skoufis is taking one step further to be more connected and accessible to the community. Beginning in August, Skoufis will be holding office hours at local supermarkets, giving you yet another convenient way to meet with him to discuss your thoughts. For locations and times, visit Assemblyman Skoufis' website at: [assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-Skoufis](http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-Skoufis).

## Homeowners must now register to maintain Basic STAR exemption in 2014

To ensure taxpayers are protected from fraudulent STAR claims, all homeowners receiving the Basic STAR exemption need to register with the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance to continue receiving exemptions in 2014 and subsequent years. **Registration begins Aug. 19 and continues through Dec. 31.** The tax department will mail instructions to Basic STAR exemption recipients. Seniors receiving Enhanced STAR are exempt from this registration process and must continue to apply annually, or participate in the Income Verification Program like they have in the past. Basic STAR recipients can register online at [www.tax.ny.gov](http://www.tax.ny.gov) or over the phone by calling 518-457-2036.

## News from



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For more information,  
call 845-469-6929

## Stay informed and help me go green. Sign up for e-newsletters.

Like you, Assemblyman Skoufis calls the Hudson Valley home. He took part in spring clean-up events across the district. To sign up for e-newsletters, visit [assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-Skoufis](http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-Skoufis).



*James Skoufis at the Fort Montgomery/9W cleanup.*