



A Legislative Update from Assemblyman Kieran Michael Lalor



Join Assemblyman Kieran Michael Lalor in honoring our WWII Veterans

Assemblyman Lalor invites you to attend a ceremony honoring local WWII Vets and commemorating the 71st Anniversary of D-Day

June 5, 2015
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Freedom Park in the Town of LaGrange
212 Skidmore Rd., Pleasant Valley

Join us at the park's band shell. In the event of rain, the ceremony will be relocated to the park's pavilion.



Dear Friend:

In five years, Albany has increased an already bloated budget by more than 10%. That's \$15.26 billion more this year than just five years ago. Florida has a larger population and half the state budget. How can we compete with that if we don't get spending under control?

This budget doesn't do anything to make New York more job-friendly or stop the exodus of New Yorkers to other states. There are a few good things in this budget, many bad things and some downright ugly aspects. Consequently, I voted against the budget bills.

Those who vote "yes" on a budget are saying this is the best we can do. Voting against a budget is not voting against the positive aspects of the budget. Rather, a "no" vote on a budget is a statement that we can do better. I have no doubt that we can do better.

Sincerely,

Kieran Michael Lalor

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Kieran Michael Lalor Presents **THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY** of the 2015 NY Budget

THE GOOD:

Fixing Albany's STAR Program Mistake

In 2013, a number of people who bought homes between about July and November made an understandable and innocent mistake with their STAR applications and ended up without STAR for the next year. The mistake was caused by New York State not properly explaining new requirements to new homeowners. Earlier this year, I introduced a bill that would offer a rebate to these homeowners who lost their STAR exemption because of the state's mistake. The budget includes that rebate.

Pension Forfeiture for Crooked Politicians

Finally, Albany is promising to introduce a constitutional amendment that would strip state pensions from politicians convicted of corruption. But we will need to pass the amendment in the Assembly and then again in both chambers in 2017. Only then will it go to voters for their approval in 2018. In the meantime, I have introduced legislation that would require pension forfeiture as part of any plea deal offered to a politician charged with corruption. We don't need a constitutional amendment to make that happen. We should move forward with this bill now.

No "Green" Giveaway to Billionaire Donor

We had a glimmer of hope on the crony capitalism front from the budget. The Senate dropped its attempted giveaway to billionaire donor John Catsimatidis. This would have cost New Yorkers tens of millions of dollars. Catsimatidis was lobbying for a regulation that would mandate a biofuel his company makes. He stood to reap a windfall through his new biofuel production plant. The plan would have added \$150 million to the cost of heating oil across New York.

THE BAD:

Corporate Welfare and Pork

Once again, the budget is laden with corporate welfare and pork barrel projects. Gov. Cuomo's own tax commission acknowledged that the Hollywood tax subsidies don't work. Still we are giving millions to film production and have expanded it to the music and video game industries to the tune of \$470 million per year. The Assembly sponsor admitted in debate that no cost-benefit analysis was done before we handed out another \$50 million in tax credits to the music and video game industry. We already spend five times more on corporate welfare than any other state, still our unemployment rate is above the national average and our growth rate lags behind the rest of the country. More corporate welfare isn't going to get New York's economy moving. Small businesses need relief, but the budget has them subsidizing corporate cronies and glamorous industries.

No Tax Relief

There's no sign of tax relief for ordinary New Yorkers. Yacht owners will get a hefty sales tax cut for their luxury purchases, but the rest of New York is still left with the huge tax bill. New Yorkers pay the highest taxes in the nation. Families are drowning in all of the taxes and fees. This budget doesn't offer desperately needed tax relief.

No Mandate Relief

Seven months ago, just before Election Day, every politician in Albany was talking about mandate relief. Now, there's no mandate relief in the budget. Once the election was over, it was back to business as usual for Albany. Unfunded mandates are the driving force behind high property taxes. We need to prove that mandate relief isn't just election year talk.

No Veterans Equality Act

Gov. Cuomo waited until after Election Day last year to veto the Veterans Equality Act. It had been passed with nearly unanimous support, but Gov. Cuomo claimed he vetoed the bill because it should have been in the budget. He wasn't being straight with us. The governor didn't include the Veterans Equality Act in his own budget proposal and it isn't in the final budget. We should have honored our veterans with this bill.

Weak Ethics Reform

We heard a lot of big talk from Gov. Cuomo and legislative leaders on ethics reform, but once again, they didn't deliver. We don't have term limits, though a supermajority of New Yorkers want them. We didn't even get term limits for legislative leaders. The LLC fundraising loophole remains in place. The per diem reform is tepid at best, with no requirement for receipts. Legislators can still exploit the system to pay their mortgages or pocket the balance of the \$172 per day they don't spend. In the wake of the indictment of former Speaker Sheldon Silver, we missed a historic opportunity to fundamentally change Albany.

No Fixes to Crushing Medicaid Spending

Medicaid eats up at least a quarter of the budget. New York is one of the few states that gives Medicaid to non-citizens, which costs twice as much as providing Medicaid for citizens because the federal government doesn't provide a dollar-for-dollar match for non-citizens. New York's Medicaid program costs more than those of Florida and Texas combined. Meanwhile, when middle-class New Yorkers who have paid into the system their whole lives have major health issues, New York tells them to take a walk because they own a home or managed to save a few bucks over the years. A budget that doesn't address Medicaid is, by definition, inadequate.

Bogus Education Reform

The education budget bill is called the Education Transformation Act of 2015, but it transforms nothing. It is an abdication of responsibility by the Legislature. The budget empowers the unelected Board of Regents and the interim education commissioner to determine the controversial teacher evaluation system. The decision over whether so

much emphasis should be put on standardized tests was also outsourced to the Board of Regents, rather than to elected representatives who, like me, overwhelmingly oppose the hyper-focus on standardized tests. While every institution in all fields should strive to improve, most schools in our state are performing. The teachers and public schools in my district are quite good. Still this budget's one-size-fits-all approach holds up education funding increases for good schools until the districts jump through hoops because schools in other parts of the state have problems. This doesn't make sense. This budget also misses the opportunity to incentivize, through a tax credit, charitable contributions of \$50 million per year to public schools and \$50 million per year to parochial schools and other non-public schools.

Finally, a quarter of the budget is dedicated to education. Education is possibly the most important aspect of the state budget. Yet the material education portions of the budget were released, debated and voted on with almost no opportunity for lawmakers to speak with education officials in our districts or consult with other experts. This is no way to make decisions and it is an affront to democracy.

Funds The SAFE Act

Again Albany is throwing good money at bad policies with funding for the SAFE Act, which punishes the law-abiding gun owner and does nothing to get guns out of the hands of criminals. I continue to support full repeal of the SAFE Act and oppose funding the instrumentalities of SAFE Act enforcement and registration.

THE UGLY:

Legislative Pay Raise Commission

The budget authorizes a panel to give legislative pay raises so legislators won't have to risk an ugly vote to give themselves more money. It takes away accountability and transparency and it's constitutionally dubious.

Deeply-Flawed Process

A budget that is decided by four men behind closed doors is a disservice to the public. There is not one voice in the budget room from north of White Plains. How can this process possibly represent New York? At a minimum, the Senate and Assembly minority leaders should be included in the budget process to increase transparency.

Worse, Gov. Cuomo used a message of necessity, overriding the state constitutional provision that requires three days for legislators to review bills. The budget rams through billions of dollars in spending without adequate time to review it, speak with constituents or get input from experts.