



Assemblyman

Robin Schimminger

Reports to You

Final 2015-16 state budget brings home funding

The New York State Legislature completed action on the 2015-16 State Budget at 2:30 a.m. on April 1. The \$142 billion spending plan notably includes increased funding for Roswell Park Cancer Institute, various health care initiatives, area school districts, libraries, local road repairs and the NFTA.

Roswell Park, a mainstay of the burgeoning Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, is among the oldest National Cancer Institute designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the United States, established in 1898. While the Governor's Executive Budget had proposed to significantly reduce state funding for Roswell, the Western New York Legislative Delegation fought for and won a full restoration of \$15.5 million in cuts sought by the Governor for a total of \$102.6 million in state funding for the hospital.

Additionally, in an effort to roll back shortsighted cuts advanced by the Governor, the final budget includes a \$21.3 million restoration for 39 health programs that would have experienced a 15 percent across the board funding cut. The funding is structured into five grant pools including \$6.8 million for public health workforce programs; \$5.5 for maternal and child health programs; \$5.5 million for chronic disease prevention and control programs; \$2.6 million for health outcomes and advocacy programs; and \$900,000 for infectious disease and other health programs.

Ensuring that New Yorkers can obtain affordable health insurance was also a top priority of the Legislature and therefore we eliminated a \$69 million new state tax on all health insurance policies proposed by the Governor to pay for the cost of running the state's health insurance exchange under The Affordable Care Act, also known as "Obamacare."

With more than 400,000 New Yorkers afflicted with Alzheimer's Disease, the need for additional care and services was recognized by the Legislature and an unprecedented \$50 million in funding for Alzheimer's programs was contained in the budget. Organizations that work with individuals affected by Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia will be eligible for \$25 million in funding this year and \$25 million next year. The money will help pay for a 24-hour helpline,

respite care, support groups, training for family caregivers and provide financial assistance to the nine Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Centers around the state. The WNY Alzheimer's Association, that serves more than 55,000 patients, will be receiving approximately \$1 million from this appropriation.

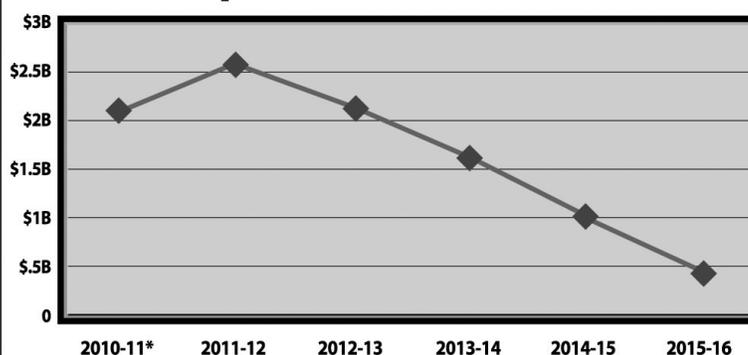
The final budget also allocates \$23.5 billion for formula-based school aid, an increase of \$1.4 billion over last year's level, to support important programs and services used to educate pupils and prepare them for college or a career. Every school district in Erie and Niagara counties benefited from this funding increase to varying degrees. School districts in the 140th Assembly District, which include the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District, Tonawanda City School District, North Tonawanda City School District, Sweet Home Central School District and a small part of the Buffalo Public School District, each received significant increases in their school aid.

Buffalo Public Schools received a 3.9 percent increase for a total allocation of \$579.5 million. The district is the second largest in the state and has an enrollment of 31,815 students. The Ken-Ton School District, with an enrollment of 7,096 students, received its largest increase in recent history - 10.8 percent - for a total appropriation of \$47.5 million. Tonawanda City School District, with 1,740 students, received a 9.9 percent increase for a total appropriation of \$14.9 million. North Tonawanda City School District, with 3,668 students, received an 8.9 percent increase for a total allocation of \$31.59 million. Sweet Home School District, with 3,261 students, received a 7 percent increase for \$17.5 million in school aid.

One of the largest components of this year's aid increase was the restoration of \$603 million to continue reducing the state's onerous Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), which was and continues to be subtracted from each school district's allocation. The GEA was put into place to help plug the state's budget deficit in the

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Gap elimination declines



*The 2010-11 GEA was partially offset by \$726 million federal stimulus funding, which is not reflected in the dollar total.

Source: N.Y.S. School Boards Association

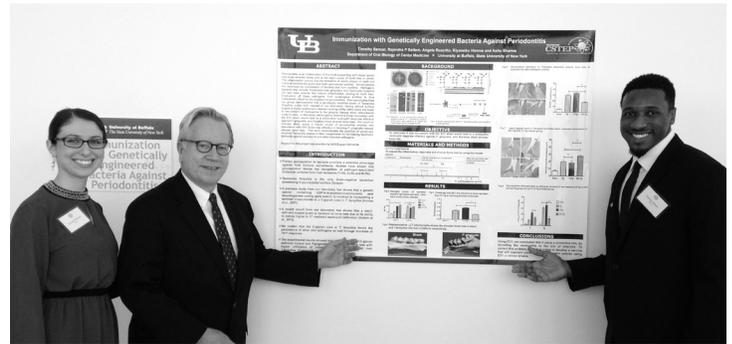
Economic development budget assists local college, university

As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Economic Development, Commerce, Industry and Job Creation, I served again this year as co-chair of the Joint Budget Conference Committee on Economic Development. I am happy to report that I was able to secure additional funding in the budget for the University at Buffalo's two Centers of Excellence, UB's Center for Advanced Technology and Canisius College's Women's Business Center and Center for Professional Development.

The final budget agreement included an additional \$1.28 million for New York State's ten Centers of Excellence, guaranteeing that each state designated center will receive \$1 million in operating aid. The University at Buffalo is home to two Centers of Excellence that connect high-potential partners with a vast array of resources key to emerging and innovative industries. UB's Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences offers expert business consultation, use of state-of-the-art research facilities and equipment, assistance with research and development, as well as access to the world-renowned faculty at UB to health care and life sciences companies.

The newer UB Center of Excellence in Materials Informatics, the designation of which I championed in 2012, focuses on breakthroughs in the ever-changing manufacturing industry, specifically in advanced materials and nanotechnology. By leveraging UB's cutting edge materials science, big data analytics and advanced manufacturing expertise, it will drive critical R&D activities that directly impact private sector growth.

These two Centers of Excellence have played key roles in helping the Western New York economy turn the corner. This is evident in the medical corridor surrounding the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus in which several area hospitals have been built, relocated or expanded – such as the new Gates Vascular Institute, Buffalo General Hospital and Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Currently under construction is the John R. Oishei Children's Hospital, which is expected to open in 2017. The Center of Excellence in Materials Informatics is on a similar path with the recent establishment of



PREVENTING TOOTH DECAY

Silvana D'Ettore, a Health and Human Services student at the University at Buffalo, and Assemblyman Robin Schimminger learn about an experiment being conducted by pre-dental students at UB that would create an immunization to prevent tooth decay. Timothy Semon, who has been working on the experiment with Dr. Ashu Sharma of the Department of Oral Biology of Dental Medicine, explained that the protocol being tested has completed its first phase, showing positive results, and has now entered its second phase. The presentation was given at UB's Clinical & Translational Research Center, which is located above the Gates Vascular Institute on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

Buffalo Manufacturing Works, a state-of-the-art resource center for area manufacturers.

The state's network of research university-based Centers for Advanced Technology will also see a \$500,000 funding increase for a total of \$14.32 million. The University at Buffalo Center for Advanced Biomedical and Bioengineering Technology will receive a portion of those funds to continue its efforts to facilitate the commercialization of life sciences inventions that help grow new businesses and the state's economy.

Finally, \$200,000 was allocated for Canisius College's Women's Business Center and Center for Professional Development. The Center for Professional Development offers training and development to the Western New York business community and non-profit organizations. Canisius College's Women's Business Center provides real-world expertise to help female entrepreneurs looking to start or expand a business.

Final 2015-16 state budget

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2009-10 state budget. I voted against that budget and have long opposed the GEA. The \$603 million restoration is significant and represents a 58 percent reduction compared to last year's GEA. While I was hopeful that the GEA would have been completely eliminated this year, we have steadily been reducing the GEA and I am hopeful that we will be able to totally eliminate the remaining GEA calculation in next year's budget.

Library Aid was also increased by \$5 million over the Governor's original proposal of \$86.63 million. The total allocation of \$91.6 million is nearly 6 percent greater than last year's funding amount. In addition, \$14 million in library construction aid was included and will be made available to eligible libraries for upgrades to their facilities.



VISITING SENIOR CITIZENS

Assemblyman Robin Schimminger visited the senior center at Northwest Buffalo Community Center, where he was greeted by seniors and asked to call a game of BINGO during a recent luncheon. Pictured from left to right are Marie Crawford of Tonawanda, Assemblyman Schimminger, Executive Director Larry Pernick, Dorothy McCarthy of Buffalo and Betty Wolfram of Buffalo.

Brownfield cleanup program renewed

The final state budget rejected the Governor's original proposal to create new hurdles across the state for brownfield redevelopment projects, which would have been particularly detrimental to development in Western New York and throughout upstate. Instead, the Brownfield Cleanup Program has been extended for 10 years and includes important reforms to protect taxpayers and promote brownfield redevelopment.

The Brownfield Cleanup Program creates jobs, helps remove hazardous materials and substances from abandoned properties and puts dormant land back on the tax rolls. It has been successfully used in Western New York on more than 70 projects since the program's inception in 2003, including right here in the 140th Assembly District at the former Remington Rand site in North Tonawanda and the former Polymer Applications site in the Town of Tonawanda. Other area projects also benefiting from the program include the Buffalo Outer Harbor, the Riverbend site and now the former Millard Fillmore Hospital at Gates Circle.

The program assists developers and property owners with cleaning up and redeveloping of old industrial and commercial properties, so that the once abandoned sites can be put to use again. Such properties are often heavily contaminated, and therefore the substantial remediation and construction costs can outweigh the future value of any redevelopment. In exchange for participating in the program under state environmental oversight, the developers receive tax credits to compensate for the high cost of cleanup and construction.

The Governor's Executive Budget proposal included significant new thresholds that developers would have had to meet to qualify for the program, which would have threatened to curtail development activity here in Western New York. Because of my efforts and those of my upstate colleagues, those hurdles were eliminated from the final budget for all projects other than those in the City of New York. The Brownfield Tax Credit Program has been extended through the year 2025 so that planning for future projects can go forward. Applicants will have until 2022 to apply for the program.

Under the new guidelines, asbestos and lead-paint abatement will also qualify for cleanup, even without demolition. The legislation allocates an additional \$100 million for the program and extends the related Superfund program for 10 years and earmarks \$1 billion for it.



CELEBRATING A CHAMPIONSHIP

Assemblyman Robin Schimminger joined in congratulating Will Regan, senior captain of the University at Buffalo's basketball team, UB President Satish Tripathi and the University community on the team's first-ever Mid-American Conference Tournament Championship, which allowed the players to advance to the NCAA basketball tournament. Will Regan, center, is standing tall and showcasing the MAC trophy.

State funding to support public transportation, aid in road repairs

Over the last several years, state funding for upstate transit systems has remained flat, but, because of the efforts made by upstate lawmakers, the final 2015-16 state budget increased state aid by \$25 million for upstate transit systems, including the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA).

The increase in state aid will provide the NFTA, which operates public buses including the Paratransit Access Line (PAL) paratransit service and the Metro Rail system, with an increase of \$2.6 million in operating assistance and an additional \$3.9 million in capital assistance for a total boost of \$6.5 million. The added funding will allow the NFTA to purchase new buses, restore some budgeted service cuts and move forward with some smaller capital projects that had been previously deferred due to a lack of funding.

The budget also invests \$488 million to support local highway and bridge repair projects through the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program, also known as CHIPS funding, which includes \$50 million added by the Legislature to address this year's severe winter weather that resulted in a significant number of potholes and road surface damage.

The City of Buffalo, in which I represent all of Riverside and portions of Black Rock and North Buffalo, has been earmarked to receive roughly \$4.5 million in CHIPS aid. The City of Tonawanda will receive \$403,084; the City of North Tonawanda will receive \$817,333; the Town of Tonawanda will receive \$443,345; and the Village of Kenmore will receive \$181,649.

State grant brings BPO concert to Tonawanda

The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra will be performing an outdoor concert in the City of Tonawanda on July 5, because of a special \$22,500 state grant that I secured. The free public concert at the David L. Miller Bandshell in Niawanda Park will begin at 6 p.m. The conductor will be Stefan Sanders, a BPO Associate Conductor. Music will be by John Williams, John Phillip Sousa and Leonard Bernstein, in addition to crowd favorites like the *Sabre Dance* and melodies from the *Sound of Music*. Blankets and lawn chairs are permitted.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway ceremony set

Legislation I sponsored, which was enacted into law last Fourth of July, has rededicated the Twin Cities Memorial Highway in the cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda as the Twin Cities Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway. A rededication of the highway is scheduled for later this month with N.Y.S. Department of Transportation officials and representatives of area veterans' organizations. The original intent of our local officials in the early 1970s was to pay homage to those who died in Vietnam by dedicating the Young and Division Street Arterial in their honor. But as the war still raged in the jungles of Vietnam and war protesters marched in the streets, the words "Vietnam Veterans" were not included in the formal naming of the highway. That omission is now being rectified.



Spring 2015

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PLAYING BEAUTIFUL MUSIC

Lisa and Dave DiCioccio visited the Assembly chamber in Albany with their daughter Mary, a Kenmore East senior, who was introduced during a Legislative Session by Assemblyman Robin Schimminger in recognition of her accomplishments as one of two student string bass players selected to perform with the New York School Music Association vocal jazz ensemble, which performed in Albany this spring.