Dear Neighbor:

This edition of my Community Report includes updates on the passage of the 2018-2019 State budget and other items of interest to our community. Some of the more notable accomplishments of this budget season include securing record funding for K-12 education, building on our commitment to fight the opioid epidemic, and protecting our drinking water from emerging contaminants.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and useful. My staff and I are available to assist you in my District Office located at 149 Main Street, Setauket. You can also contact us by phone at 631-751-3094 or email at englebrights@nyassembly.gov. For your convenience, my office also provides complimentary notary public services and senior citizen cards.

Sincerely,

Steve Englebright

K-12 Education, Library, and Higher Education Funding

K-12 Education Aid

The 2018-19 statewide budget increases school aid by $914 million, or 3.6 percent compared to last year.

A record total of $26.7 billion in state school funding helps reaffirm Assemblyman Englebright’s commitment that every student should have the opportunity to succeed. School districts within the 4th Assembly District will receive $292,569,517. This is a $10,798,488 or 3.7% increase over last year and will help keep property taxes down while supporting exceptional learning opportunities for our children.

Funding Our Libraries

Libraries are stars among our institutions of optimism and they are essential to thriving communities. The State budget continues our commitment to local libraries, providing a total of $96.6 million. This is a record amount of funding that is $5 million over the Governor’s budget proposal. Also included is $34 million in capital funding for new construction and expansion of individual libraries across the state, which is an increase of $10 million over SFY 2017-18.

Gelinas Junior High High School Science Olympiad Team wins NY State Competition

Assemblyman Steve Englebright recently presented the Gelinas Junior High School’s Science Olympiad team with Assembly Citations to recognize the team’s analytic abilities and problem-solving skills. In May, the Gelinas team won first place at the NY State Science Olympiad Competition allowing them to attend the Nationals in Fort Collins, CO. Gelinas students placed in 5 out of 23 competitions and ended the Nationals with a team ranking of 11 out of 60 teams nationwide. Gelinas JH is part of the Three Village School District.
Investing in Higher Education

SUNY and CUNY

Investing in higher education helps students and their families meet the rising costs of college. The budget commits $7.6 billion in state support for higher education. Also included are record levels of more than $1 billion in funding for tuition assistance and financial aid. The budget provides SUNY and CUNY with more than $200 million in new resources to support the operations of the university system. This helps to ensure a high quality education while maintaining affordable tuition that provides access for all students.

Community Colleges

To help community colleges enable students to get ahead, the budget provides a base aid rate of $2,847. This reflects a $100 per full-time student increase.

Reducing Taxes for Middle-Class New Yorkers

The new budget continues the phase-in of the $4.2 billion Middle-Class Tax Cut to deliver relief to six million New York taxpayers. The tax cut will save households $250 on average this year and $700 annually when fully effective in 2025. The budget also includes provisions to decouple the state tax code from the federal tax code to avoid more than $1.5 billion in state tax increases resulting from federal tax code changes.

The budget also continues the local property tax relief credit program, which will provide an average reduction of $380 to 2.6 million homeowners in 2018. Next year, the tax relief credit will offer an additional $1.3 billion in property tax relief and save homeowners an average of $530. If you receive the Enhanced STAR exemption or credit, your credit amount will be a set percentage of your Enhanced STAR savings for each of the following years: 2018—26% and 2019—34%.

Combatting the Opioid Crisis

The budget establishes the Opioid Stewardship Fund to provide $100 million in funding to support programs operated by OASAS for opioid treatment, recovery, prevention, and education. This new program requires manufacturers and distributors licensed to sell or distribute opioids in the State to contribute an amount of money based on their eligible opioid sales into the Opioid Stewardship Fund to ensure that the cost is borne by manufacturers and distributors, not consumers. Assemblyman Englebright believes that companies that profited from aggressive marketing of painkillers like OxyContin which fueled the epidemic of opioid addiction and led to an increase in illegal heroin use should help pay for the devastating effects these drugs have had on our communities.

Preventing Violence against Women and Supporting Survivors of Sexual Assault

Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Domestic Abusers
Crime statistics indicate that 54 percent of female homicides are committed with a gun, and two-thirds of all women homicide victims are killed by their male partners. In addition, women are far more likely to be killed by an abuser if there is a gun in the home. This new law will prohibit domestic violence perpetrators from easily possessing a gun, and thereby reduce the number of domestic violence incidents that end in fatality.

Support for Survivors of Sexual Assault
This year's budget contains much-needed changes in the way the evidence preserved in rape kits is stored and tracked. Federal law mandates that testing of a rape kit requires authorization from the victim. But it may take months or even years for a survivor of sexual assault to be ready to pursue criminal charges. In recognition of the time realities of the healing process, the law now extends the period of time unreported rape kits are maintained from 30 days to 20 years to allow victims the time they need to decide to have their kits tested. In addition, survivors will never have to incur any financial costs for insurance co-pays for rape examinations or hospital visits. This change in law will also establish a central location for the storage of evidence and a tracking system so that sexual assault survivors are notified where their kits are stored and when the 20-year storage period is set to expire.

Sunshine Center for Prevention

Dr. Carol Carter and her staff at Sunshine Center in Port Jefferson Station are leaders in the field of substance abuse and violence prevention. For over 25 years, Sunshine has provided prevention-focused education, social-skill development, and other support services helping empower young people to make healthy choices. We are fortunate to have them as part of our community and Assemblyman Englebright supports this essential organization with funding that helps to underwrite Sunshine's community programs.
Every Day is Protect Your Aquifer Day

On Long Island, we live on top of our water supply. We need to safeguard our aquifers to ensure clean drinking water. One of the most effective organizations dedicated to ensuring that we have clean water is Water for Long Island which holds an annual Protect Your Aquifer Day. From left to right: Dr. Sarah J. Meyland, Director of the Center for Water Resources Management at The NY Institute of Technology; Assemblyman Englebright; County Legislator Sarah Anker; Bill Stedmann, Sierra Club; and Charles Bevington, Water for Long Island.

Stony Brook University Clean Water Initiatives

The Center for Clean Water Technology at Stony Brook University will be receiving $4.5 million in Environmental Protection Fund grants for the following projects that will benefit our Long Island region directly but may also be applicable to other regions.

**Nitrogen-reducing Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems**

$3 million will go to develop and commercialize affordable, reliable, easy-to-operate, and nonproprietary treatment systems for individual onsite wastewater that can significantly reduce nitrogen loads and other contaminants to ground and surface waters.

**Removal of 1,4-dioxane from Drinking Water**

$1 million will go towards research on methods to remove the emerging contaminant 1,4-dioxane from water supplies. 1,4-dioxane is found in personal care products, food packaging, detergents, cosmetics, children's toys, degreasers, plastics, all-purpose cleaners, and building supplies. It is classified as a likely carcinogen by the EPA and is persistent in the environment.

**Creation of University Lab Facilities to Test for PFOA**

$500,000 will build lab space at Stony Brook University for the testing of the emerging contaminant PFOA. PFOA is a fluorinated organic compound that was used extensively to make carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food, and materials like Scotchguard and Stainmaster that are resistant to water, grease or stains. PFOA was also used to make the firefighting foam spreadable and was widely used at military airfields and commercial airports.

**Fighting to stop drilling for oil and gas off our coast**

In January, the federal government announced plans to allow offshore gas and oil exploration in waters off the east and west coasts of the US including New York. Assemblyman Englebright is leading the opposition to this proposal. In February, he held a hearing on Long Island to examine the implications for New York’s environment on water quality, coastal management, fishery impacts, and the potential for increased oil spills and pollution if such lease authorizations and subsequent drilling occur. The hearing lasted for 6 hours and not a single testifier was in favor of the proposal.

New offshore drilling would damage the marine ecosystem and put Long Island’s coastal communities and our tourism and marine economies at great risk from oil spills.

Protecting the Environment

The state budget includes $300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) that supports programs to enhance community parks, preserve open space, eradicate invasive species, and address climate change, among many other important programs. The EPF specifically includes $2 million for the Central Pine Barrens Commission to combat the Southern Pine Beetle. This destructive southern species has recently made its way north due to our warming climate. The state will also continue its $2.5 billion commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to clean drinking water.

**Long Island Pine Barrens Expansion**

Assemblyman Englebright has been successful in adding 1,000 acres to the Long Island Pine Barrens Core Preservation Area including more than 800 acres of pristine coastal forest owned by National Grid in Shoreham that had been slated to be clear-cut for a utility-scale solar installation. This preservation classification will help to protect the area’s water quality and preserve its uniquely diverse habitats as well as complete a contiguous greenbelt of natural properties that run from the Long Island Sound to the Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge on the Great South Bay.
Supporting the Health and Well-Being of Older New Yorkers

This year’s budget helps seniors needing assistance to remain in their homes by supporting long-term care with an $8.16 million allocation. The sum of $7.81 million is also provided to preserve spousal refusal so that couples do not lose their life savings when an ill spouse needs nursing home care. Additionally, the budget restores nearly $14 million to prevent hospital and nursing home reductions and $12 million in managed care reductions.

Also supported are a wide array of senior citizen resource programs including:

- $50 million for the Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program;
- $29 million for Community Services for the Elderly Program;
- $27 million for the Wellness in Nutrition Program;
- $27 million for Alzheimer’s and other dementia related programs;
- $1.2 million for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program;
- $1.1 million in Transportation Services for the Elderly;
- $353,000 for Caregiver Resource Centers;
- $250,000 for Older Adults Technology Services; and
- $86,000 for the New York Foundation for Seniors Home Sharing and Respite.

Fighting Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Key measures to prevent sexual harassment and strengthen protections for employees are contained in this year’s budget including the requirement that all employers in the state institute a comprehensive sexual harassment policy. To support this effort, the Department of Labor and Division of Human Rights will develop a model policy that employers can either adopt or exceed through their own decision-making processes. These new state standards are designed to prohibit sexual harassment and ensure the timely and confidential investigation of complaints. This measure also bans mandatory arbitration agreements as well as confidentiality clauses in any settlement unless specifically requested by the victim. This will also apply to independent contractors, subcontractors, vendors and any businesses participating in competitive bidding for the state.

Voluntary Retirement Savings Program

To help employees save for retirement, the budget creates a voluntary payroll deduction IRA for employees of employers that do not currently offer retirement savings plans. Known as the New York State Secure Choice Savings Program, this program will allow 3.5 million New Yorkers who do not have an employer-sponsored retirement plan an opportunity to save for their future. Employee contributions would be managed by a professional investment firm overseen by the state thereby eliminating costly financial barriers to employers while providing an easy and effective way to save for the future through payroll deduction. Each employee would own their IRA — and could take it to any new job. Participation is voluntary for both businesses and employees.

Need a Notary?

Assemblyman Englebright’s Office Provides FREE Notary Public Service

WEEKDAYS 9:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M.
149 Main Street
East Setauket, NY 11733
631-751-3094

Please bring your driver’s license or passport for identification purposes.

Special traveling Notary Service provided for homebound residents in the 4th Assembly District. Call 631-751-3094 or email englebrights@nyassembly.gov to set up an appointment.