



Assemblymember
Robert C. Carroll
Assembly District 44

January 5, 2018

My Thoughts on the State of the State and the Legislative Session Ahead

On Wednesday, I was in the Capital with the rest of the legislature to listen to Governor Cuomo present his State of the State address. The Governor outlined many of New York's challenges; including, a \$4 billion budget deficit, a \$2 billion reduction in federal Medicaid Aid, and a new federal tax scheme that will raise many middle income families' taxes. It is important to note that New York is already the top "donor state" in the nation—contributing \$48 billion more annually to the federal government than it gets back and under the new law the State will pay an additional \$14 billion per year. The Governor outlined in broad strokes possible new taxes (a payroll tax paid by employers and a Stock Transfer Tax) and fees, as well as a possible reduction in the State Personal Income Tax for individuals and families earning between \$40,000 and \$300,000 per year. With our mass transit and roadway system in dire need of repair and modernization, the Governor also alluded to the possibility of tolling East River bridges and other measures to capture revenue for the MTA and reduce traffic in Manhattan.

Along with discussing the state's revenue, the Governor highlighted many critically important pieces of legislation that must be passed this year including: codifying a woman's right to choose, electoral reforms, banning outside income for legislators, closing the LLC Loophole and implementing a campaign finance system, ending cash bail, and protecting undocumented New Yorkers.

The Governor's speech was broad and many of the policy points and tax proposals he outlined need to be clarified and specified before I or the legislature can voice our support or opposition.

Here's where I stand on the critical issues facing New Yorkers in 2018:

The MTA

Any plan to modernize and fund the MTA has to start with: a dedicated revenue stream; a reworking of how major projects are proposed, designed, and built; and with a reimagining of how to operate a 21st Century mass transit system. This means the legislature must either implement some form of tolling on East River Crossings and 60th Street in Manhattan, place a surcharge on all app based cab rides (\$1 for each Uber or Lyft could raise \$200 Million), dedicate part of the State's Personal Income Tax directly to the MTA, and finally raise taxes on individuals who make more than a million dollars a year. With that dedicated revenue we also must make sure the MTA is no longer the most expensive mass transit system in the world by a factor of five. We should insist on implementing design-build procedures so we have one contractor supervise the design and construction of a project instead of two separate entities, which invariably causes waste and duplication.

Electoral Reforms

New York has some of the worst voting participation rates in the nation and that is due in large part to our regressive and antiquated voting laws and non-competitive elections. Same day registration along with electronic polling books would make primary and election day more accessible to all New Yorkers. If the state were to couple that with an early voter period of at least two weeks and no fault absentee voting, many of the impediments to voting that we commonly see would be eliminated. However, these alone will not fix the system. We must also do away with our deeply flawed special election system that gives power to a select few in choosing who represents us in the state legislature. Additionally, we must change the way candidates raise money by closing the LLC loophole and creating a campaign finance system that rewards small dollar donations and limits the impact of large donors and corporations.

Women's Reproductive Health

New York's reproductive health laws are out of date. Last year the Assembly passed A.1378 and A. 1748 to rectify this inequity. [A.1378, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act](#), requires health insurers to cover all FDA-approved contraceptive drugs, devices and products when they are prescribed by a health care provider. The legislation, though, leaves in place existing state law that allows religious employers to request an insurance policy that does not cover contraceptive methods. Further, the measure ensures coverage for emergency contraception, voluntary sterilization, patient education and counseling and all related follow-up care. Insurance companies are prohibited from charging co-pays, co-insurance payments and deductibles for contraception and are barred from imposing any restrictions or delays with respect to coverage of FDA-approved contraceptive drugs, devices and products when they are prescribed by a health care provider.

The Assembly also passed [A. 1748](#) to protect a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy within 24 weeks, or when the pregnancy is not viable or endangers her life or health. Both pieces of legislation emphasize that the goal of medical laws and regulations should be to improve the quality and availability of health care, not to place undue burdens on patients and providers. Unfortunately, the New York State Senate did not pass these two critical pieces of legislation last year and we will have to again push to get these bills to the Governor's desk.

Criminal Justice Reform

Last year we were able to raise the age of criminal responsibility for most crimes to 18. This was a necessary and long overdue reform. This year we must continue to fix our criminal justice system by eliminating cash bail in all but the most extreme cases, ensure that all defendants receive a speedy trial, and create a more fair parole system. Cash bail is an outdated tool that often ends up jailing individuals not because there is a known risk or because the crime is severe; but simply because the person is poor. There are many ways to ensure that defendants appear for trial without bail and the legislature and governor should work this year to make this a reality. Too many individuals have spent years awaiting trial - this is a travesty and it must end. We have to find a way to create a clear framework for pretrial proceedings and discovery, and to ensure that everyone receives a speedy trial. This serves the interest of those who are accused, but also the interest of the public by making sure there is a fair, accurate, and timely resolution of criminal cases with the effective utilization of state resources. Finally, for too long our Parole Board has used outdated criteria for deciding if a prisoner is eligible for parole. Meaningful parole reform would evaluate applicants on their readiness to re-enter their communities and not solely on the nature of their crime, which they can never change, and which was taken into account when they were sentenced.

Public Schools

[With the current budget constraints, it is imperative that we mobilize early to make sure New York City receives its fair share of State Education funding.](#) For years New York City has not received its fair share in foundation aid (the main state mechanism in funding our New York City Public Schools). We also must make sure we continue to voice our concerns to our State Regents about having an appropriate curriculum that is not based around standardized testing in grammar school.

Environment

[Last year I was the only freshman Assemblymember and the only member of the Brooklyn delegation to receive a perfect 100% rating from all of the environmental advocacy groups that released an environmental scorecard.](#) With the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Paris Climate agreement it is more important than ever for New York to take a leadership role in combating climate change and sea level rise. New York needs to invest today in wind, solar, and geothermal so that we hit our goal of 80% renewable energy by 2050. However, we should do more to make sure homeowners are given greater incentives to retrofit their homes with solar power and geothermal pumps. Seventy five percent of emissions in New York City come from buildings so we must tackle this problem or we will not see the needed reduction in our carbon foot print to meet our targets. While doing all this we must fight to preserve our Adirondack and Catskill State Parks and make sure that the EPA is properly administering superfund clean ups around Brooklyn and our State.

The New York State Liberty & Dream Act

Since the Senate did not act last year, the Assembly will again pass [The New York State Liberty and Dream Act](#), which together will ensure the fair and ethical treatment of ALL New Yorkers and ensure that our immigrant children have the educational opportunities they deserve. Now more than ever, we must protect our friends and neighbors from the corrosive and anti-immigrant policies coming from Washington. For generations, New York City has been home to people from all over the world. They come here for a better life, for freedom from oppression, for their chance at their American Dream. If we turn our backs on them now, we turn our backs on everything our country and our city stands for. As someone whose Grandfather immigrated from Ireland in the 1940s and who represents thousands of people who come from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Russia, Mexico and elsewhere, I know how important immigrants are to our city and neighborhoods.

The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA)

[The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act \(GENDA\)](#) would expand protections under the Human Rights Law by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression in considerations of employment, education, consumer credit and housing. In addition, this legislation would add offenses motivated by a person's gender identity or expression to the hate crimes statute. I am proud to have co-sponsored this bill last year and look forward to supporting its passage again this year and ask that you call on the Senate to allow this bill to get to the floor.

Rights for Adoptees

[I am proud to be a sponsor of A-6821-A, a piece of legislation that would grant adult adoptees access to their original birth certificates.](#) This bill gives adoptees the basic civil and human rights that all other New Yorkers have, which is to have unencumbered access to their own personal identifying documents. **I was pleased that the Governor vetoed a piece of legislation last week that would have put up further road blocks for adult adoptees to gain access to their birth certificate.** Currently, adult adoptees must petition a judge and show "good cause" to demonstrate why they should be granted access to their own birth certificate. This is much too burdensome and discriminates against hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.

Community Calendar – The Week Ahead:

MulchFest

Prospect Park at the 3rd Street entrance and the Park Circle entrance

Saturday and Sunday, January 6-7

10am to 2pm

Join Prospect Park Alliance and the Park Slope Civic Council on January 6 + 7 for MulchFest! Bring your holiday tree to Prospect Park, where it will go through a chipper and transform into environment-friendly mulch. Plus, you can take some home for your own yard or garden. Please remove all decorations from the trees.

Volunteers are needed to help assist people who bring their trees in for recycling by removing ornaments and distributing mulch. [Register to volunteer today.](#)

Community Board 14 Monthly Meeting

Edward R. Murrow High School

East 17th Street, between Avenue L and Avenue M

Monday, January 8

7:30pm

Open to community members. The [CB 14](#) board meeting is typically scheduled on the second Monday of the month at different locations during the year.

CAMBA Home Base Housing Workshop on Affordable Housing

1117 Eastern Parkway, 3rd Fl, Brooklyn, NY

Tuesday, January 9th

9:30 am – 10:15 am, 10:30 am – 11:15 am, or 11:30 am – 12:15 pm

The Outreach Team at CAMBA HomeBase will be hosting a housing workshop series, Place, Preserve, and Protect. The first workshop of our series, “Place” Tips for Becoming Tenants will give an overview of various methods, tools and techniques to teach tenants on ways to find an apartment. Also, we will briefly discuss how to apply for affordable housing through HPD’s Housing Connect.

Pre-screens will be available after each session. Light refreshments will be provided.

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Please call (718) 622-7323 to sign up for a session or if you have any questions.

72nd Precinct Community Council

Marien-Heim Senior Center

4520 4th Avenue

Tuesday, January 9th

7:30pm

Open to community members. The [72nd Precinct Community Council](#) meetings typically take place on the second Tuesday of each month.

Community Board 6 Monthly Meeting

Cobble Hill Health Center

380 Henry Street (between Congress and Warren Streets)

Wednesday, January 10th

6:30pm

Open to community members. The [CB 6](#) monthly meeting is typically scheduled on the third Wednesday and the location moves around during the year.

Happy New Year,

Bobby

P.S. Please join Old First Reformed Church, Congregation Kolot Chayeinu and me for a special interfaith service on Ethical Resistance and The Franchise in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr on Monday, January 15th – See details below:



ETHICAL RESISTANCE & THE FRANCHISE

A Special Interfaith Service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Monday, January 15th

1:00 PM

Old First Reformed Church
729 Carroll Street @ 7th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Hosted by: Old First Reformed Church,
NY State Assemblymember Robert Carroll
& Congregation Kolot Chayeinu

Assemblymember Robert Carroll

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