



A Message from Assemblywoman  
**Sandy Galef**



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*Upcoming Events 2018*  
 • May 2018 •



Dear Constituent,

Last fall, we witnessed the beginning of a public reckoning as an avalanche of explosive allegations of sexual harassment or misconduct crippled and brought down powerful leaders in all industries, from politics to entertainment and everything in between. Through the #MeToo movement, many people heard for the first time about the prevalence and severity of workplace sexual harassment, while others finally found the courage to speak about their abuse to others.

I and my colleagues in Albany were listening. As we said in 2015 after New York created the most stringent campus sexual assault laws in the country, “Enough is enough.” This year’s 2018-2019 approved state budget included sweeping measures that are the strongest and most comprehensive protections against sexual harassment in the country.

Among the provisions is the requirement that every employer establish a sexual harassment policy for their employees and that it is provided to them in writing, although such policy could be adopted from a model one created by the NYS Division of Human Rights. The policy bans mandatory arbitration clauses. It also includes language that non-disclosure agreements could only be used in settlements at the victim’s request, not the perpetrator’s wishes.

As sexual harassment and assault have no place in society, nor can they be tolerated in state government. The budget also dictates that any state official, elected or not, and employee who is found liable for sexual harassment may be required to personally reimburse the state for a victim’s settlement.

For my part, I wrote a letter to Governor Cuomo in November just as the first accusations against prominent figures started to surface, asking him to convene a special statewide task force dedicated to examining the issue and to adopt a uniform policy for all state workers. In order to effectively find remedies to stamp out sexual harassment, we must take a macro look at individual communities and professions to identify vulnerabilities that promote or incubate abusive environments.

I want to continue this discussion with you. I will be presenting a “Know Your Rights” community forum on workplace sexual harassment on Thursday, May 17th at 7 p.m. at the Cortlandt Town Hall, located at 1 Heady Street, Cortlandt, NY. The goal is to explore the individual and systemic issue of sexual harassment, the role of gender in workplace power, legislative efforts to combat it, as well as current legal landscape to handle complaints. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Sandy Galef

**Assemblywoman**  
**Sandy Galef**

Invites you to attend her

**Community Conversation on Sexual Harassment**

What are your rights: What is in place, what is being done, what we still need to do to keep people safe

**May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

**Cortlandt Town Hall**  
**1 Heady Street, Cortlandt, NY**

**Panelists Include:**

**Sarah Brafman, Esq.**

*A Better Balance:  
 The Work & Family Legal Center*

**Lisa Lipman, Esq.**

*National Employment Lawyers  
 Association of New York*

**Greg Chartier, Ph.D.**

*Chair of Human Resources Council,  
 Westchester Business Council*

*Representative from*

**NYS Attorney General  
 Eric Schneiderman’s Office**

I encourage you to bring your friends, family, neighbors and anyone else you think would be interested in this complicated issue that affects all of us.

# Notes from the Election Reform Forum



On April 10th, I hosted a meeting to discuss a variety of ideas that have been proposed to increase voter turnout and improve the experience of voters in New York State. We are not leaders in the percentage of eligible citizens who are registered to vote, and many of these registered voters do not show up to vote on Election Day. Our panelists included Joanna Zdanys, Counsel for NYU’s Brennan Center’s Democracy Program, Jennifer Wilson, Program and Policy Director for the League of Women Voters of New York State, Jeanne Zaino, Professor of Political Science at Iona College and Anthony Scannapieco, Jr. and Catherine Croft, both Election Commissioners for Putnam County.

Discussed in depth was the concept of Early Voting. This idea, which was proposed with funding in both the Executive and Assembly Budget proposals, was not maintained in the enacted 2018-2019 Budget. Despite being abandoned in the budget negotiations, it has gained a significant amount of visibility. New York is one of 13 states without a way to vote early unless you qualify for an absentee ballot. Early voting is credited with reducing long lines at polling places, cutting down on administrative issues during the evening rush to vote, improving poll worker performance, and reducing stress on the voting system on Election Day. Hesitation, however, is not negligible as early voting is more costly. The budget proposals

included funding, but did not provide for continued funding, leading to concern that this would become an unfunded mandate. Research, also, has not shown that early voting increases voter turnout as much as it improves the voting experience.

Absentee ballots were also a subject of conversation, as they can be a roadblock in the ability of individuals to vote. Currently, in order to receive an absentee ballot in New York State, you must fill out a lengthy form that includes questions about why you will be unable to physically be at the polling place on Election Day. These sorts of questions can feel invasive, and it is unclear what the value of knowing why someone is unable to vote in person on Election Day is. Automatic Voter Registration makes registration an “opt-out” system rather than an “opt-in” system, increasing the number of registered voters. However, automatically enrolling citizens as voters when they register with the Department of Motor Vehicles does not necessarily increase the number of people who actively vote, just the number of people who are registered.

The long and short of it is that there are a number of election reforms to consider, and a lot of work to be done, but we do have options to improve the voting system in New York State. The charts below show the differences in registration and voter participation in each state.

**Percent of Adult Citizens who Voted in November, 2016**  
(U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey)

MAINE	73%
WISCONSIN	71%
COLORADO	79%
NEW HAMPSHIRE, MINNESOTA	69%
VIRGINIA, MISSISSIPPI, NORTH CAROLINA	68%
NEBRASKA, MASSACHUSETTS	67%
OREGON, WASHINGTON, MONTANA, MARYLAND	66%
MISSOURI, WYOMING	65%
MICHIGAN, NORTH DAKOTA, CONNECTICUT, ILLINOIS, OHIO	64%
IOWA, UTAH, PENNSYLVANIA, VERMONT	63%
DELAWARE, IDAHO, SOUTH CAROLINA, LOUISIANA, NEW JERSEY	62%
<b>UNITED STATES AVERAGE</b>	<b>61%</b>
ALASKA, KANSAS, RHODE ISLAND, NEVADA	61.3%
ARIZONA, GEORGIA, FLORIDA	60.4%
SOUTH DAKOTA, ARKANSAS	59%
INDIANA, CALIFORNIA	58.3%
ALABAMA, <b>NEW YORK</b> , KENTUCKY, OKLAHOMA	57%
TEXAS, NEW MEXICO	55%
TENNESSEE	54%
WEST VIRGINIA	51%
HAWAII	47%

**Percent of Adult Citizens Registered to Vote in November, 2016**  
(U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey)

MAINE, MISSISSIPPI	80%
MINNESOTA, WASHINGTON	77%
WISCONSIN, NEBRASKA, VIRGINIA	76%
NEW HAMPSHIRE, NORTH DAKOTA, MARYLAND, NORTH CAROLINA	75%
COLORADO, ILLINOIS, MISSOURI, MICHIGAN, MASSACHUSETTS, MONTANA	74%
OREGON, LOUISIANA, DELAWARE	73%
IOWA, OHIO, PENNSYLVANIA, VERMONT, SOUTH CAROLINA	72%
SOUTH DAKOTA, ALASKA, WYOMING, CONNECTICUT, UTAH, KANSAS	71%
<b>UNITED STATES AVERAGE</b>	<b>70.3%</b>
RHODE ISLAND, NEW JERSEY	70%
GEORGIA, KENTUCKY, NEVADA, ALABAMA, ARKANSAS, INDIANA, IDAHO, ARIZONA	69%
OKLAHOMA, TEXAS	68%
TENNESSEE, FLORIDA, <b>NEW YORK</b>	67%
NEW MEXICO	66%
CALIFORNIA	65%
WEST VIRGINIA	64%
HAWAII	54%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2016

# Budget Highlights



*I attended a press conference with Senator Terrence Murphy, County Legislator John Testa, Town Supervisor Linda Puglisi, and Mayor Theresa Knickerbocker to announce the inclusion of moneys for the Power Plant Cessation Fund in the 2018-2019 Budget. This allocation of \$24 million will help the Town of Cortlandt, Village of Buchanan, and Hendrick Hudson School District and Library, and the Verplanck Fire District as Indian Point Energy Center closes operations.*

## STAR Rebate

New York continues to have the STAR rebate and the budget allows it to grow with inflation, helping to ease the tax burden of many in our communities.

## \$24 Million for the Power Plant Cessation Fund – to Help with Tax Losses from Indian Point

The budget allocated \$24 million in an appropriation for the power plant's closing in the future. This fund will serve as a state support for combating the negative economic impacts of the closure of Indian Point. This money is the first step to helping to mitigate the financial hardships that will come through the plant's closing. It can be used to help the Hendrick Hudson School District, the Town of Cortlandt, the Village Buchanan, and the library and fire department with budget shortfalls that will arise with the closure of the plant. This money is a way to provide some comfort to the local taxpayers.

## School Foundation Aid – \$76,462,132

This year my district receives \$76.5 million in Foundation Aid from the state to fund our schools. While there is much more to do in terms of funding our schools and it remains my priority, it is important to understand that we have made a lot of progress so far. This year's negotiations were made difficult by the \$4 billion deficit the state was facing.

## Middle Class Tax Cut

New York State continues to phase in the middle class tax cut, reducing the State tax burden of New Yorkers, while continuing to cap state spending and property taxes.

## Voluntary Retirement Savings Program

We created a system that allows employees in the private sector who do not have access to a retirement fund to opt into this program. This requires a minor payroll change that does not cost employers anything. This helps millions of New Yorkers to plan for retirement, specifically those who were not otherwise able to do so.

## Response to Federal Tax Law Changes

In response to federal changes in tax law, the state adopted an option for two new approaches to prevent double taxation. The first approach is an Employer Compensation Expense Program where employers would pay a 5% tax on total payroll expenses, reducing the employee's pay, while then receiving a tax credit from the state to maintain original take home pay. The second approach allows New Yorkers to contribute to healthcare and education in the state. Those who itemize their deductions may claim these contributions as deductions. Those who do this can also claim a State tax credit for 85% of their donation. The same policy can be implemented on a local level as well.

## Guns and Domestic Abuse

The budget included a provision that would require domestic abusers to surrender their firearms.

## Rape Kits

We expanded the length of time that sexual offense evidence collection kits are preserved from 30 days to 20 years. This will finally help to bring justice to survivors and their families.

## Election Infrastructure

The budget included \$5 million to help secure our election system from cyberattacks.

We expanded the advertisement definition to include transparency in online and digital advertisements. It requires platforms to maintain files on all political advertisements and to ensure that no foreign individual or entity purchases advertisements to influence our elections.



*I had the pleasure of attending the Westchester Library System's annual breakfast where Croton's Karen Zevon and I "met" Archie from the Archie comics. Our libraries are vital to the educations of our entire communities, and I am glad to say that we were able to increase funding for libraries in the 2018-2019 Budget to enable them to continue to perform their important functions.*



The Lincoln Society is a fantastic organization that commemorates President Lincoln's visit to Peekskill and ensures that his legacy is not lost in our local collective memory. I received the Friend of History award from the Lincoln Society in March.



Every year, Corrections Officers and members of the Ossining community gather to honor the lives of Corrections Officers and Police Officers who lost their lives ensuring the security of the prison and the neighborhoods surrounding it.



I had the pleasure of having Sarah Johnson, the Putnam County Historian, as a guest on my television show "Speak Out with Sandy Galef." You can catch our conversation about Putnam County's incredible role in the fight for Women's Suffrage on your local public TV stations on May 16th, 23rd, and 30th, and June 6th at 8:30 pm.



I attended the 2018 Peekskill St. Patrick's Day Parade with a large number of people, including Pat Garvey and Fran Gibbs. Although it was cold, it was a great day to celebrate the many contributions of Irish Americans to our society.



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Westchester County recently passed legislation to ban the question of a prospective employee's previous salaries in order to ensure that people are paid for a job, not paid less than one would pay a different person. This legislation is important to me on the state level as well, where I sponsored legislation that passed the Assembly on April 16th.



I had the pleasure of attending Gordon Vincent Moccio's Eagle Scout Ceremony on April 15th. Gordon is a member of Carmel Troop One, and it is wonderful to see young people such as Gordon give their time and energy to their communities.