

Fall 2024



# Assemblyman **Fred W. Thiele, Jr.**



## **Reports to the People**

### **Budget News**

Since this was my last State Budget, I was so pleased that the enacted 2024-25 State Budget put forth so many transformative measures in a fiscally responsible manner. It includes robust funding for worthwhile initiatives that power our state and local governments, continues the commitment to a quality education for our children and makes college a tangible reality for more students. It also makes great investments in our environment and water quality. Here are some notable highlights affecting the 1st Assembly District.

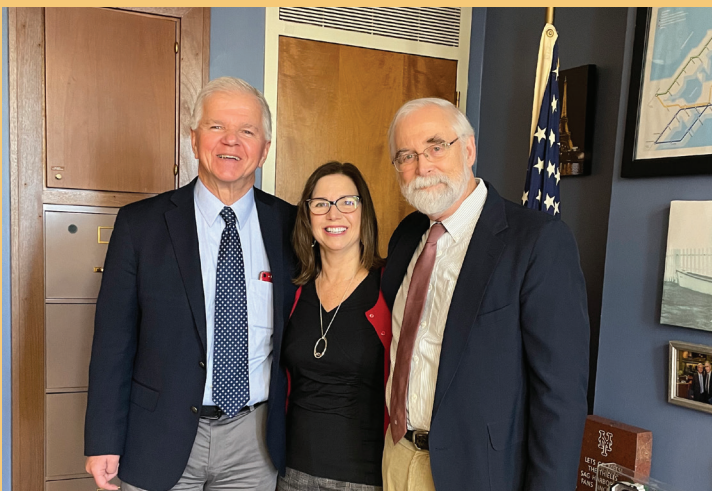
#### **Keeping Up with the Success of the South Fork Commuter Connection**

Ridership on the South Fork Commuter Connection (SFCC) continues to grow. I once again fought to secure \$750,000 in the adopted 2024-25 State Budget to keep operations of "last-mile" bus shuttle service flowing smoothly. I also serve as a member of the South Fork Commuter Coalition which brings together state and local elected officials, local businesses, schools, riders, and other stakeholders to lobby the MTA to include in their five-year capital plan, a \$260 million infrastructure project to support increased LIRR service to and from the South Fork.



*South Fork Commuter Coalition's "Rally for the Rails" Press Conference on May 17th.*

*(Photo Credit - Christopher Walsh/Express News Group)*



*I met with representatives from Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, Founder and President and Kathleen Kennedy, Senior Manager of Outreach, on February 14th to discuss funding for the EPF.*

#### **Clean Water Infrastructure and the Environmental Protection Fund**

The Legislature was successful in pushing back against the proposed \$250 million cut to the Clean Water Infrastructure Act thereby maintaining the funding level at \$500 million. The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) will once again be allocated \$400 million and assigns increased amounts to areas that could significantly benefit the East End including land acquisition, farmland protection, water quality improvement and waterfront revitalization.

## Building a Stronger Foundation Aid Formula

This year's adopted State Budget invests \$35.9 billion to fund the General Support for Public Schools (GSPS), which includes \$24.9 billion in Foundation Aid, a \$934.5 million increase over last year. It keeps in place the "Hold Harmless" provision of the foundation aid formula which keeps K-12 school districts from receiving a cut in Foundation Aid due to any changes in enrollment. Further, \$2 million was directed to fund a Foundation Aid study, conducted by SUNY Rockefeller Institute of Government with the input of state agencies and stakeholders, to review the funding formula and make recommendations on a fair, long-term formula that will ensure the State is living up to its constitutional obligation of providing a sound basic education going forward. I participated in a roundtable hosted by the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association and heard from educational leaders across Long Island who discussed the implications of changes to the formula that was presented to the Rockefeller Institute at a public hearing held on July 30th in Farmingdale.



*New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) Committee of 100 Lobby Day was held in Albany on March 5th. I am pictured with members representing school districts in the 1st Assembly District after a discussion on NYSUT's 2024 legislative and budget priorities.*



*On March 20th, I congratulated the Southampton High School Orchestra after their outstanding Music In Our Schools Month performance in Albany.*



*One of the many visits I look forward to every year is from students representing the Southampton Town Youth Bureau. This year the group traveled to Albany on February 6th to participate in the Association of New York State Youth Bureau's Leadership Summit. Their efforts in advocating for increased investments by the State to promote positive youth development programming and intervention services paid off with the inclusion of \$15.6 million in funding in the final 2024-25 State Budget to support the Youth Development Program. Pictured with me are members of Southampton Town's Youth Bureau Advisory Committee.*

## A Bigger Boost for PEP

On the East End of Long Island, our environment is our economy. I have long advocated for increased investments in clean water projects and programs under the Environmental Protection Fund, including the Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP). Since its inception, PEP has protected our water, habitat and wildlife, and supported coastal resiliency projects throughout the estuary. During this year's Budget cycle, I fought to secure an additional \$200,000, for a total of \$750,000, to support PEP's essential programming to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary and its watershed.



*On February 27th, I welcomed members of PEP's Citizens Advisory Committee who serve as ambassadors for PEP in East End communities. This group traveled to Albany to meet with legislators to discuss relevant issues pertaining to the protection of the Peconic Estuary and its watershed.*

## Gains for New York's Public Libraries

Libraries are vital institutions of foundational and lifelong learning. Adequate funding is essential to expand upon the use of existing resources and develop innovative ways to effectively meet the needs of a growing community patronship. I am excited that the enacted 2024-25 State Budget increased Library Aid (the primary source of funding for New York's library systems) by \$4.25 million over last year for a total of \$103.9 million. An additional \$10 million, for a total of \$44 million, is dedicated to support Library Construction Aid.



*New York Library Association's 2024 Advocacy Day was held in Albany on February 7th. This year, I met with representatives from the Long Island Library Resources Council, including local library directors and supporters from the East End, to discuss legislative and budget priorities.*

## TAP Celebrates 50th Anniversary

The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) has been helping to make a college education more affordable and accessible in New York State since its inception in 1974. In celebration, this year's final 2024-25 State Budget provided an additional \$55.7 million to increase the TAP income limit threshold, raise the minimum TAP award from \$500 to \$1,000 and expand part-time TAP to proprietary college students.



*I was interviewed by my constituent, Egypt Dozier, a student attending Five Towns College, on the Association of Private Colleges Student Advocacy Day on February 27th.*

## Local Governments

During my tenure as Chair of the Assembly Local Governments Committee, I have worked with associations representing municipalities across the State of New York in the fight to boost Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) funding which has remained stagnant since 2012. This year was no exception. I stood firm on my commitment and successfully negotiated a \$50 million increase in AIM funding to better support local governments and bolster economic development.



*As Chair of the Assembly Local Governments Committee, I was proud to address members of the New York State Fire Service Alliance at a press conference on February 27th in support of their 2024 legislative initiatives. (Pictured with the President of the Firemen's Association of the State of New York, Edward Tasse, Jr.)*



*I was invited to attend NYS Conference of Mayor's Winter Legislative Meeting on February 5th at the Marriott Albany. (Photo courtesy of NYS Conference of Mayors)*

## Improving the Quality of Life for our Companion Animals in Shelters

Since 2017, funding has been included in the enacted State Budgets for the New York State's Companion Animal Capital Fund (CACF) which has been instrumental in supporting several shelter organizations with construction, renovation, and expansion projects to enhance animal care and help ensure adoptions. Locally, the Southampton Animal Shelter was awarded \$402,608 of this funding for the replacement of kennels and the installation of a high-performance epoxy floor system. The enacted 2024-25 State Budget again directs \$5 million to the CACF.



*I presented an Assembly Proclamation to congratulate the Animal Rescue Fund of the Hamptons on its 50th Anniversary on June 21st.*

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