



Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski

End of Session Update 2015

Dear Neighbor:

I am writing to update you on some of the legislative highlights from the 2015 session. It was a successful year in Albany; we passed our 5th consecutive on-time budget, and the Legislature approved many important initiatives to improve the lives of New Yorkers. In addition to passing important bills, the Assembly made significant reforms that protect the environment and overall public health. Individually, I authored and passed several pieces of legislation that range from protecting domestic violence victims to amending New York's town referendum process.

There have been many changes in education this year and I have made it a priority to ensure that the most important voices are being heard: parents, teachers, and students. Over the past few months, I have attended several Board of Regents meetings and summits. In collaboration with our new Regent Judith Johnson, we have worked to create a more tangible relationship with the Board of Regents by allowing parents, teachers, and the community as a whole the opportunity to voice their concerns directly to her.

Although our work is never finished, I hope you can find the enclosed information of interest, and more importantly, a sign of continued progress for the State. I hope that you and your family had a safe and fun summer and enjoy the upcoming school year. Thank you for the opportunity to represent Rockland in Albany again this year.



Assemblyman Zebrowski welcomes new Regent Judith Johnson

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Zebrowski". The signature is stylized and written in cursive.

Ken

Increasing State Aid to Schools

In this year's budget, Assemblyman Zebrowski helped to secure a \$1.6 billion increase in education aid for New York State, bringing an additional 5.8% increase to Rockland schools as well as a 50% restoration to the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). Ken and the Legislature approved a bill that will require New York to increase funding for SUNY and CUNY schools. The State would be required to cover mandatory costs such as salaries and benefit increases for employees in order to mitigate further tuition increases. Ken is committed to ensuring that higher education in New York State is adequately funded and attainable for residents to attend.

Making Changes to the Common Core

As a part of last minute negotiations before the end of session, the Legislature agreed on a final package that includes changes to the common core. Ken advocated and was successful in securing amendments to teacher evaluations. These changes: ensure that state exams are grade level appropriate, require that individual student characteristics are considered in student growth measures, require the State Education Department to release more test questions and answers, prevent teachers from signing documents prohibiting them from discussing exam questions that are made public, and finally, provide a critical and comprehensive review of common core standards. Education has always been a top priority for Assemblyman Zebrowski and he is committed to ensuring that education in New York State only continues to improve.

Combating Sexual Assault on College Campuses

Assemblyman Zebrowski and the Legislature passed legislation to change the way sexual assault is handled on New York State college campuses (A.8244). The new law implements

several measures to combat sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, etc. by requiring all colleges to adopt uniform policies including setting a specific standard for consent under their codes of conduct. The legislation also provides victims with amnesty when reporting an incident. State colleges will also be required to institute a bill of rights and adopt uniform policies regarding reporting and what happens in the aftermath of reporting an incident. Assemblyman Zebrowski wants to ensure that students are protected in these cases. Too often, sexual assault on campuses goes unreported; these laws seek to combat the problem by creating specific definitions and making students feel safe.



Fighting for the Students of East Ramapo

During this legislative session, Ken worked very hard to get legislation passed for the students of East Ramapo. Following the recommendations made by fiscal monitor Hank Greenberg, Assemblyman Zebrowski, Assemblymember Jaffee, and Senator Carlucci drafted legislation that would install an oversight monitor in order to begin to resolve the conflict in the district (A.5355A). In the bill, the Monitor's responsibilities would have included overseeing fiscal operations and ensuring educational opportunity by developing a strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan. The Assembly passed the oversight bill that was supported by the State Education Department, the Governor, as well as education, religious, legal, and civil rights organizations. Unfortunately, after passage through the Assembly, the Senate would not bring the bill to a vote and refused to compromise. They reduced the Monitor's powers to only address State and Federal Law with no authority to implement academic and fiscal improvement plans. Assemblyman Zebrowski was willing to compromise on some details, but could not accept a bill that did not allow the Monitor the ability to intervene when necessary. Ken attempted several times to negotiate in good faith with the Senate, but was never met halfway. Since the end of session, Assemblyman Zebrowski called on the State Education Department to take swift action in the district regarding oversight. In June, Ken wrote a letter to Education Commissioner Elia specifically requesting that the State Education Department use its authority to install a temporary monitor to be in the district on a day-to-day basis to better understand daily operations and to work on a long-term solution. On August 14th, SED officially announced the appointment of a temporary monitor: Commissioner Elia named Dennis Walcott and a team of two assistants, Monica George-Fields and John W. Sipple, to oversee operations. Mr. Walcott's team will have a constant presence in the district and community, work with teachers and parents, have access to all records, and will attend board meetings. At the end of the appointment in December, the team will provide their findings and recommendations, as well as offer long-term solutions to put the district back on track. Although Assemblyman Zebrowski would prefer a monitor with broader powers as

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outlined in the original legislation, he believes this is a positive step for the district, and he is happy that SED took his concerns into account and took swift action in establishing oversight. Ken is committed to working with the monitors, the State Education Department, parents, and teachers to ensure that students are protected and receiving their basic right to a quality education.

To read the letter Assemblyman Zebrowski sent to the State Education Department, you can visit his Assembly website at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Kenneth-Zebrowski/>.

Continuing Ethics Reform in Albany

In an effort to continue to strengthen ethics reforms and restore public trust, Assemblyman Zebrowski co-sponsored legislation that passed the Assembly that would ensure public officials that are convicted of corruption are stripped of their taxpayer funded pensions. The constitutional amendment would not only apply to state elected officials but to those serving on the local level, and would be retroactive.

Banning the Use of E-Cigarettes Indoors

Ken was a strong advocate and a co-sponsor of a bill that passed the Assembly that would ban the use of electronic cigarettes indoors and in certain outdoor public areas (A.5955-B). E-cigarettes have become increasingly popular while remaining largely unregulated. There is little known about the dangers of secondhand smoke from E-cigarettes and this legislation will ensure that individuals are not exposed to potentially toxic chemicals.

Property Tax Relief

Ken worked hard this year to ensure that Rockland middle-class families would see property tax relief. During the final negotiations, the Legislature agreed to extend the tax cap until 2019 and create a STAR rebate check that will be mailed to Rockland homeowners for



additional property tax relief. In addition to this rebate, Ken also fought hard against the Governor's proposal in the original budget to freeze the STAR program.

Making Tattoo and Body Piercing Studios Safer

Governor Cuomo recently signed Ken's bill into law that establishes common sense guidelines for materials used in tattoo and body piercing studios, a largely unregulated industry in New York State (A.1334). The law protects consumers and holds specialists accountable by requiring the use of single-use needles and inks. Re-usable materials can easily spread disease and infection. This preventative measure will ensure that studios are acting responsibly, promoting safe service, and more importantly, establishing transparency for customers.

New York's Town Referendum Process

After last year's ward vote in the Town of Ramapo, Assemblyman Zebrowski had major concerns and took initiative to update New York's town referendum laws. Ken drafted legislation, that overwhelmingly passed the Assembly, that amends the referendum process by allowing citizens to hold public petition referendums on the day of a general election; instead of holding a special election set up by the town (A.4200-B). The bill would also designate the Board of Elections to run the referendum during the general election instead of the town. This would ensure that all regular election rules apply including absentee ballots, polling places, registered voters, poll watching, etc. This would set up a more fair and cost effective process that would prevent the chaotic situation that occurred a year ago.

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Securing Funding for the Palisades Parkway

After months of pushing for long-overdue repairs to the Palisades Parkway (PIP), Assemblyman Zebrowski, in partnership with Assemblyman Skoufis, were successful in securing state funds to begin paving. In February, the Assemblymembers held a press conference calling on the Department of Transportation (DOT) to prioritize and make immediate repairs to the north section of the Parkway. The DOT recently announced that over \$10 million will be used toward repaving, specifically the area from the PIP bookstore to Bear Mountain Circle. This phase is to begin in Summer 2015 and end Fall 2016. The second phase includes \$9.8 million in repairs to PIP south of the bookstore and will begin Winter 2016. Although these funds are a great start, for years, Assemblyman Zebrowski has pushed the DOT to include the entire rehabilitation project north

of exit 10 and will continue to do so. He recently sent a letter and requested that the DOT extend paving to exit 10 in order to improve the entire parkway.

Protecting Domestic Violence Victims

Assemblyman Zebrowski's bill to increase the statute of limitation for civil suits related to domestic violence passed the Assembly unanimously this year (A.7037). Currently, domestic violence and assault cases are treated in the same way: by requiring that civil suits are initiated within one year of the incident. Ken's legislation takes into account the very sensitive nature and difficult factors involved in domestic violence cases and affords victims an extra year to make a decision before they are barred from doing so.



Assemblyman
**Kenneth P.
Zebrowski**

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