



# Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski



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Dear Neighbor:

2021 is hopefully a year of recovery and the Legislature recently adopted a state budget that invests in our collective rehabilitation. The recently enacted New York State budget prioritizes and makes significant investments in our students, small businesses and infrastructure, the arts, tax relief for middle class families, and services for those hit hard by the pandemic.

I fought very hard for Rocklanders throughout the entire budget process, meeting with many groups and residents on issues that affect our community. Like any budget, there were difficult negotiations, especially in a State as big and diverse as New York. However, I am happy to report that there are many provisions I helped secure that will positively impact neighborhoods across our County.

This mailing will provide an overview of some of the budgetary items that will help Rocklanders. In a year when many feared devastating cuts, we were able to achieve historic investments that will help lift us out of the pandemic.

As always, my office is open for your ideas, feedback, and questions. Please do not hesitate to reach out through my contact information above — your inclusion is necessary to us moving Rockland and New York State forward.

Sincerely,

Ken Zebrowski

## Historic Levels of School Aid Funding

The 2021-22 state budget includes unprecedented funding for Rockland schools. After a year of dealing with the challenges of educating amid COVID, Ken was able to help secure significant state aid for districts.

- Total state aid to Rockland schools will increase by \$65 million — a total of \$288.7 million and a nearly 30% increase.
- Foundation aid will increase by \$28.95 million — \$166.46 million total. There's also been a commitment to fully fund foundation aid within 3 years.
- For years, Assemblyman Zebrowski has fought to expand early childhood opportunities and achieve universal pre-K; eliminating the current lottery system. This budget increased 4-year-old pre-K funding by \$105 million outside of NYC providing many more slots for Rockland 4-year-olds.
- The budget ensures that federal aid from the American Rescue Plan and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) will flow directly to schools without any offsets or adjustments.
- Ken worked to successfully stave off devastating cuts to reimbursable funding like transportation and BOCES.

These historic investments will directly benefit Rockland students and provide relief to property taxpayers. Thanks to Assemblyman Zebrowski's dogged advocacy, this state aid will provide immediate relief and he will continue to build on this momentum for Rockland schools moving forward.



## Providing Relief for Middle Class Families

Assemblyman Zebrowski has spent his career fighting for property tax relief and programs that benefit the middle class. This budget took some major steps to do just that:

- The State Budget preserves income tax cuts for New Yorkers earning between \$43,000 and \$323,000. This is part of a multi-year income tax relief program that started in 2018 and cuts income tax rates for middle class residents. Since the program has been in effect, rates have been cut in several brackets; for example a cut from 6.85% to 5.97% in the \$43,000 to \$161,000 household bracket.
- Ken has been a champion for property taxpayers and has fought year after year to preserve the STAR program. He was successful in rejecting proposed cuts to STAR which would have hurt seniors in the enhanced STAR program.
- Assemblyman Zebrowski also helped to get a “circuit breaker” property tax relief program established in this budget for the first time ever. Residents that make under \$250,000 a year with a property tax burden over 6% of their income will receive a rebate between \$250 and \$350. This \$400 million property tax relief program has long been talked about and Ken was happy to fight for its inclusion in a State budget. He plans to work toward building this program in the future to help more residents with bigger refunds.
- To help fund some of the investments and tax relief, the NYS tax code was changed for some of the wealthiest New Yorkers earning between \$1-5 million, \$5-25 million, and over \$25 million. Tax rates for these categories will be increased from 8.82% to 9.65%, 10.3% and 10.9% with the highest rate for those earning over \$25 million.

## Fighting for Our Community

### ■ Saving Rockland Children’s Psychiatric Center

Through a massive local advocacy campaign, led in part by Assemblyman Zebrowski and Senator Reichlin-Melnick, this budget saves the Rockland Children’s Psychiatric Center (RCPC). The Legislature rejected the Executive Budget’s proposal to eliminate all the beds at RCPC, cuts that would have forced families to travel absurd distances for care. Maintaining these beds ensures that the community’s most vulnerable children and their families will have access to critical services in the region and preserves hundreds of jobs during a public health crisis.

### ■ Supporting Direct Care Workers

This pandemic has shown just how essential and appreciated front-line health care workers are. Ken knows these folks deserve much more and fought for a COLA increase of \$46.2 million in the budget for OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS direct care workers that support individuals with disabilities, those with mental illness, and or substance abuse disorders. The budget also directs \$5.6 million in COLA increases to those that work at the NYS Office of the Aging, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and Office of Children and Family Services. While this is long overdue and not nearly enough, Assemblyman Zebrowski will continue working until direct care workers are afforded what they deserve.

### ■ Investing in Our Veterans

The final budget invests nearly \$5 million in the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Program. Assemblyman Zebrowski advocated to restore \$4.5 million that the executive cut and added another \$495,000. This funding supports a local Rockland program operated by BRIDGES that assists veterans returning home by providing them with peer-to-peer support to face challenges.



*Assemblyman Zebrowski standing with advocates to save Rockland Children’s Psychiatric Center.*

## Over \$1 Billion to Support Small Businesses and the Arts

- Small businesses are the backbone of communities and have been absolutely devastated by the COVID pandemic. The State is providing assistance to ensure our main streets survive by making an investment in local economies. Additionally, the arts industry was hit just as hard by the pandemic, suffering through mass closures. Assemblyman Zebrowski fought to ensure this budget made the appropriate investments to ensure small businesses and arts organizations can survive and thrive with \$1 billion in funding.
- An \$800 million Small Business Recovery Grant program was established to help those that have struggled to stay open amid the pandemic. The grant program will be open to small businesses/art/cultural organizations that experienced a loss of revenue or hardship by providing funding for rent, payroll, PPE, etc.
- \$25 million grant program for restaurants that provide meals to distressed and under-represented communities
- \$35 million in tax credits for restaurants that had long closures located in orange or red zones
- \$40 million arts recovery program to assist reopening efforts for non-profit arts organizations that have been closed for most of the pandemic
- \$43.1 million for the New York State Council on the Arts program
- \$1 million new arts stabilization grant program
- \$100 million film and theatrical productions tax credit program
- \$20 million in capital support for the arts and cultural facilities improvement program

## Prioritizing Higher Education & Libraries

In addition to delivering never before seen increases in P-12 school funding, Assemblyman Zebrowski helped to support SUNY and CUNY schools and our local libraries.

The 2021-22 budget also includes investments to higher education:

- \$100 million to SUNY and \$100 million to CUNY expansion projects
- \$88 million to increase the maximum Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award by \$500 for a maximum award total of \$5,665
- The budget closes the gap between TAP awards and tuition at SUNY and CUNY by academic year 2024-25
- Rejects proposed tuition increases at SUNY and CUNY schools
- Provides \$24 million to increase community college base aid by \$50 per full-time equivalent student and to re-establish the 98% guaranteed funding base level for community colleges statewide
- Beyond investments in SUNY and CUNY, the approved budget expands college opportunity programs by providing \$30 million – a 20% increase – over last year's final budget
- \$42.6 million for the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), an increase of \$7.1 million
- \$38.6 million for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), an increase of \$6.4 million

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## Investing in Roads and Infrastructure

Ken knows that it's no secret that both state and local roads in Rockland are in need of major repairs. This state budget makes significant investments in infrastructure that are long overdue:

- The final budget provides an additional \$350 million for the second year of the Department of Transportation (DOT) two-year, \$12.7 billion Capital Plan. This funding directly impacts the following:
  - \$100 million increase to the CHIPs program – this directly goes to local highway departments across the State
  - \$50 million increase for PAVE NY which rehabilitates and replaces local roads and bridges, improving driver safety
  - \$100 million to the Extreme Winter Recovery Program – cut in the executive budget proposal, this helps with plowing expenses and winter damage repairs
  - \$39.7 million for the Marchiselli Program to help municipalities complete local road and bridge construction and improvement projects which can be extremely expensive
  - \$100 million to establish a new capital program that reimburses cities, villages and towns for capital project costs on local roads and bridges
  - \$3.6 billion for the core Road and Bridge capital program

## Prioritizing Higher Education & Libraries

(Continued)

Libraries are the cornerstone of local communities, especially during the pandemic. Ken once again proved his commitment to strengthening libraries by helping to include a \$2.5 million increase and \$4.5 restoration for a total of \$94.2 million for local libraries. The budget also provides an additional \$20 million for library construction grants for a total of \$34 million.



*Ken debates a bill on the floor of the Assembly.*

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*Assemblyman Zebrowski continues the fight to expand full day pre-K with Vicki Caramante, Executive Director of Child Care Resources of Rockland, and Westchester Assemblymembers Paulin and Galef.*