



NEWS From Assemblymember John T. McDonald III

2020 END OF SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every facet of our lives and forced us to make drastic adjustments to our daily routine. Even though this year's legislative session looked different, I am pleased to report that I was able to sponsor important legislation that was passed by both the Assembly and Senate, that hopefully will be signed into law. I have also highlighted other bills that I deem equally important and will focus on passing in both houses in the future.

Thank you for your valuable input on these and other bills during the legislative year and as always, I look forward to hearing about the issues that are important to you.



Assemblymember McDonald joins with American Red Cross Leadership and volunteers for a Memorial Hospital Healthcare Workers Appreciation Event and to unveil a new Disaster Relief Emergency Response Vehicle that he helped secure funding for.

Highlights of bills sponsored by Assemblymember McDonald that have passed both the Senate and the Assembly

A.8610-B McDonald / S.8782 Breslin

This bill amends previously enacted early voting provisions to provide that, in each county, the largest municipality by population must contain at least one early voting polling location. This legislation will ultimately ensure that the most populated city in each county is provided with early voting, thus preventing disenfranchisement, whether unintentional or deliberate, of urban voters and users of public transportation. This bill will not alter the number of required polling locations, rather it further clarifies where such polling places should be located.

A.9034 McDonald / S.7115 Rivera

Allows a prescription for a schedule II, III, or IV controlled substance to be partially filled at the request of the prescriber or patient. When a patient fills a prescription for a controlled substance, they cannot request a partial fill unless they are willing to forfeit the remainder (except under limited circumstances). Most patients will accept the full amount since they are paying the cost of their copay; yet, there are some patients who would prefer a partial fill due to concern of the volume of drugs in their household and based on a greater awareness of the current opioid crisis. The intent is to allow pharmacists, at the request of patients, to reduce the amount dispensed to help address the supply in the community.

A.9524 McDonald / S.6965 Salazar

Requires that information be made available to parents regarding window blind safety. Chapter 648 of the Laws of 2019 required the Department of Health to include information on the dangers window blinds may pose to children as part of an informational leaflet that is distributed to maternity patients at prebooking. The language in this bill modifies that initial proposal to focus on corded window blinds which pose the greatest risk to children. Additionally, providing this information to parents at their six-month wellness visit, rather than at prebooking, for maternity patients will serve to make parents aware of this important information as their child begins to become more mobile. This bill was signed into law by Governor Cuomo in April this year.

A.9536 McDonald / S.4741-B Harckham

Enacts "Stephen's law;" requires certified treatment programs to notify patients of their right to name an emergency contact. This bill, named in Stephen Canastraro Jr.'s memory, simply requires that certified treatment programs notify patients of their rights to identify individuals who should be contacted in case of emergency. This bill will allow those struggling with substance abuse to have a point of contact that providers can reach out to when individuals start to show the signs of treatment failure and provide the support individuals need to continue treatment and live a life of recovery.



Assemblymember McDonald joins Senator Breslin, Assemblymember Pat Fahy and local officials at a press conference about his legislation to prohibit the incineration of aqueous film-forming foam containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances in the City of Cohoes.

A.9952B McDonald / S.7880B Breslin

Prohibits the incineration of aqueous film-forming foam containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances in certain cities. To ensure that the public health and safety is protected, this bill would suspend the incineration of firefighting foam that contains PFAS chemicals at an incineration facility in the City of Cohoes. Due to the unknown health effects of PFAS chemicals, this legislation is critical to protecting public health not only in the City of Cohoes but the surrounding communities which are potentially impacted based on atmospheric conditions.

A.10409A McDonald/ S.8236 Gaughran

Provides that local code enforcement officers may issue blanket orders extending the expiration date for all active building permits for a period of up to but not exceeding 120 days beyond the expiration date stated in the permit. This bill will allow a local government the ability to issue blanket orders extending any building or local zoning boards of appeals and local planning boards active approvals issued before March 7, 2020 an additional 120 days. This is a necessary measure given the pending pandemic and the impact that it will have on building projects. This bill was signed into law by Governor Cuomo in June.

Criminal Justice Reform Package

It is our collective responsibility as representatives of the people, to discuss the systemic problems that surround our criminal justice system and to work together on reforms that will act to address these issues. During this legislative session I, along with my colleagues in the New York State Assembly and Senate worked to pass legislation to ensure our criminal justice system is transparent and accountable.

To be clear, these efforts are steps in the right direction, however, please keep in mind that at the heart of many of these issues is racism and intolerance. Sadly, even in the year 2020, the negative remnants of our past still resonate at times and it is incumbent upon all of us to recognize that we have more work to do.

Together, as a community, we need to ensure that what our founding fathers envisioned, that all men and women are created equal, is not just the law but the way each of us lives our lives.

We have now passed legislation to:

- Repeal 50-A, allowing members of our community to access the disciplinary records of officers
- Affirm the public’s right to record interactions with law enforcement
- Prohibit false 911 reports motivated by bias
- Ban chokeholds
- Require the use of body cameras
- Require officers who discharge a gun to provide a timely report of the firing of the gun
- Mandate that courts maintain records concerning arrests and court proceedings involving low-level offenses
- Require officers to provide attention to the medical needs of a person in custody
- Establish an Office of Special Investigation within the Office of Attorney General
- Establish the Law Enforcement Misconduct Investigative Office



Assemblymember McDonald stands with his colleagues in the NYS Assembly for a press conference about criminal justice reform legislation.

Bail Reform

The bail reform and discovery measures that were passed into law in 2019 have been a contentious topic of discussion throughout New York and the Assembly District. There were many concerns that were raised, and I participated in discussions with those for and against the measures to find the proper balance. The feeling was that the changes originally proposed went too far. After listening to advocacy groups, District Attorneys and law enforcement the Legislature came together to make necessary changes to the original bail reform legislation. The changes are at this link (<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III/story/93473>) for your review. These changes went into effect on July 1st.

To be clear, I supported these measures for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, that everyone is innocent until proven guilty. Secondly, being wealthy and able to make bail rather than being unable to pay the set price should not be the sole reason why some are free, and others incarcerated for committing the same alleged crime. These are principles most of us agree with however, the criminal justice process has always been complicated and misunderstood. Criminal justice will continue to be an ongoing discussion and as always, I welcome your thoughts and dialogue on the issue.

COVID-19 Relief Legislation

The Legislature returned to session to pass vital legislation to help New Yorkers during this unprecedented public health crisis. These included measures that will help families stay in their homes, protect critical library and school funding, ensure unemployed workers receive the benefits they need and protect health care workers and at-risk populations.

During the past few months, my staff and I have been working hard in our community to assist constituents in any way we can. Helping individuals navigate the unemployment insurance process, setting up food drives, finding and accessing testing sites, connecting area hospitals and nursing homes with testing kits and personal protective gear and sending out daily updates. We've all been working together to help one another through this difficult time. To date, we have assisted over 300 constituents with unemployment benefits. I continue to work with small businesses as they maneuver through the NY Forward re-opening process. I also assisted in pushing to secure home visitation for individuals in residential facilities. Expanding visitation at nursing homes in a safe and practical way is another goal I will continue to work toward.

Included in a package of relief bills for small businesses was legislation I introduced, A.10409, which authorizes governments to issue a single resolution extending all building permits and zoning approvals issued before March 7, 2020, for an additional 120 days. Legislation that would allow for industrial development agencies (IDAs) to implement a state disaster emergency loan program that provides up to \$25,000 loans to small businesses and not-for-profit organizations was also passed. These are common sense measures that allow local government to continue to serve their residents and support their local business community during this most difficult time.

Bill A. 10522 which established the Emergency Rent Relief Act of 2020 was also passed and signed into law by Governor Cuomo. This legislation

created a short-term rental assistance program for renters whose income was less than 80% of the area median income (AMI) and spent more than 30% of their income on rent prior to March 7. Using federal money from the CARES Act, vouchers will be paid directly to landlords to cover rent through July. \$100 million has been made available for the program and preference is given to households with the greatest economic and social need.

I will continue to push for more COVID related legislation, including a bill I introduced, A.10691, which would require any agencies purchasing



Assemblymember McDonald joins a group of volunteers at a YMCA Troy Drive Up Food Drive.

personal protective equipment (PPE) to utilize New York State owned businesses through the existing preferred source program (which is a program that employs individuals with disabilities) for at least thirty percent of the total amount purchased. The recent pandemic has shown that state agencies need a stockpile of PPE in order to deal with crises as quickly as they emerge. This bill touches on the critical need for these products to be produced domestically and within the State whenever practicable and creates incredible opportunities for the historically underserved workforce of individuals with disabilities.

Continuing to assist local governments recover from this crisis is one of my top priorities. Bill A.10820, which I recently introduced, would provide meaningful and immediate relief to the majority of New York's local governments which have come together to participate in the NYMIR cooperative insurance program by allowing NYMIR to return the outstanding balances that currently remain inaccessible in members' operating reserve accounts. This has the potential to direct over \$6 million to our local governments who participate in NYMIR.

I will keep advocating for additional assistance efforts as we know that the impact of COVID-19 will last for the foreseeable future. Whether it be to ensure that school openings are done safely or advocating for funding from the federal government for localities, I will push for the help that our communities need and deserve.



Assemblymember McDonald delivers NY Clean hand sanitizer to residents in the City of Watervliet.



Assemblymember McDonald joins City of Cohoes Mayor Bill Keeler at a Census Informational event at the Cohoes Public Library.

Census 2020

The Census Bureau has begun their outreach for its decennial count of every person residing in the United States for the 2020 Census. The information collected helps inform a host of public policy decisions, including the distribution of billions in federal funding, legislative redistricting, and congressional representation.

While filling out a census form may feel like an unimportant exercise or a boring task to complete, an inaccurate count has real-world results. Following previous census counts, New York State has dramatically suffered because of undercounting. After the 2010 Census, our state lost significant federal funding for schools, hospitals, public transportation, emergency services and so much more, including two congressional seats.

I urge everyone to fill out the census online, over the phone or on paper – the information you provide is protected. Also, the Census Bureau never asks for your full Social Security number, money or donations, anything on behalf of a political party or your bank or credit card account numbers.

Visit www.census.gov to learn more.

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NEWS From



**Assemblymember
John T. McDonald III**



Assemblymember

John T. McDonald III

ALBANY/DISTRICT OFFICE:

Room 417, Legislative Office Building • Albany, New York 12248 • 518-455-4474

EMAIL: mcdonaldj@nyassembly.gov

WEB: www.nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III

Need a speaker? I am always interested in speaking to groups and hearing what people have to say in the district. We have found great success with virtual meetings. This has provided me the opportunity to keep in touch with constituents while keeping safety concerns in mind. If your organization is interested in having me as a guest or would like a legislative update, please contact my office at **518-455-4474**.