



Assemblymember

**Anna Kelles**

Assembly District 125



April 3, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

The April 1 budget deadline has passed and we are still working hard to get a budget over the finish line – deep in negotiation on the big button issues: education and higher education, Medicaid and healthcare, housing, revenue... The Assembly and Senate will pass a budget extender this week as the Legislature continues to work toward a budget agreement with the Executive. As we lead up to the final agreement, I've joined many press conferences and rallies during the last week to advocate for critical budget and legislative priorities.

Read on for the week's highlights!

# Legislative Update

**Advocating for Home Care**

I am deeply committed to the well-being of New Yorkers, and I was proud to join the [NY Caring Majority](#) and [1199SEIU](#) United Healthcare Workers East to stand against budget proposals to cut \$1.2 billion in funding to home care. These cuts would send the quality of our healthcare, our long-term costs and our long-term economic stability in the wrong direction. We must remember homecare IS healthcare. These cuts further jeopardize the livelihoods and economic stability of over 175,000 dedicated home care workers and will exacerbate staffing shortages in a sector already under strain. Banning over 100,000 New Yorkers from eligibility for home care and cutting hours for up to 250,000 disabled and older individuals would significantly diminish access to essential services for some of our most vulnerable populations and ensure greater dependency on even more costly healthcare services. There are alternative solutions that do not involve crucial cuts to funding, such as curtailing expenses and in some cases eliminating completely costly middle-management private insurance companies, which would save the state billions while preserving vital care for those who need it most. Let us prioritize the dignity and autonomy of our citizens by rejecting these harmful cuts and investing in the future of home care in New York. You can [watch a brief video](#) of my comments.



## Invest in Our New York

As New York becomes an increasingly more expensive state to live and thrive in for working-class New Yorkers, I am advocating for a state budget that demonstrates we are listening to and prioritizing their needs, such as housing, transportation, education and childcare. At the same time, New York has the highest concentration of wealth of any state in the country, and our current tax structures foster this concentration. I joined the Invest in Our New York Coalition this week at a press conference in Albany to voice our commitment to critical investments and a more equitable way to fund them by raising taxes on the wealthiest corporations that make more than \$5 million a year while preventing any raises to small business owners. Some argue that high-income earners will move out of New York if taxes increase; however, research by the Fiscal Policy Institute has found that high earners move out of New York significantly less often than working and middle class and do not move as a response to tax hikes. We must return to a progressive tax system so that the middle class and working poor aren't paying substantially higher overall tax rates as millionaires and billionaires. Where almost every penny of income for working class people is taxable, only a tiny fraction of the income and wealth of our ultra-rich are taxed. My bill ([A.3252/ S.1570](#)) addresses this by imposing taxes annually on billionaires with one billion dollars or more in year-on-year net assets. While the ultra-rich grow richer and corporations make record profits, average New Yorkers are struggling to make ends meet. We need to put our communities over corporations and Invest in Our NY. Watch a [brief video](#) of my comments.



## Closing the Loophole on Flavored Tobacco

When New York State included language in the final 2020-21 budget to address the epidemic of e-cigarette use among youth, it created enforcement loopholes in the law that have caused challenges to effective enforcement of the law. I joined the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and my legislative colleagues at a press conference this week in support of bill [A9110](#) to close loopholes in the law that enable continued access to and promotion of flavored vaping products to youth. With flavors like cotton candy and bubble gum, these products are specifically targeted to youth. Our area schools and communities are working hard to combat the rise of vaping among our middle-school and junior-high youth. While the severe health risks of smoking cigarettes are well known, the nicotine in flavored vape products also has negative health effects, specifically affecting brain development in youth and impacting learning, attention and mood. I look forward to this important bill moving through the legislature this session to protect the health and well-being of our youth! Watch [a brief video](#) of my comments.



## Youth Advocates for Climate Jobs and Justice Legislative Package

Over 400 youth, including youth from our district, traveled to Albany this week in support of the Climate Jobs and Justice Legislative Package, including the NY HEAT Act, the Just Energy Transition Act (JETA), and Climate Change Superfund Act, and I was proud to join them at a rally to ensure these critical bills are in the budget. NY HEAT Act will end subsidies for the build out of natural gas and will add renewable energy infrastructure in the suite of options utilities companies have in their obligation to serve customers energy. JETA will transition old inefficient and mothballed power plants to renewable energy generation and upgrade related transmission line infrastructure to green our grid. The Superfund will help pay for these efforts. For over 50 years the largest polluters in the world knew they were causing climate change, and they hid the data. This bill would hold them accountable for the damage that they have already caused so that we can use that money for climate adaptation to address the climate change we are already

suffering from as a society. We must act now because inaction will be infinitely more costly to our economy, our habitat, and the quality of our lives. In 2023, climate change cost New Yorkers a combined \$2.2 billion, and each year that we resist change, the cost of inaction gets higher. This legislative package lays out the plan to combat climate change, includes how to pay for it, and creates the necessary green jobs workforce to enact it. Watch [a video](#) of my comments at the rally.





# New Laws

## **Move Over Law Now in Effect**

From 2016 to 2020, 37 individuals were killed outside disabled vehicles in New York. While the Move Over law has previously required drivers to move over for emergency vehicles, law enforcement, tow trucks and construction vehicles, [the Governor announced](#) that drivers are now required to slow down or move over when any type of vehicle is disabled or stopped on the side of a highway or parkway. Thank you to Senator Lea Webb for championing this new law and helping keep New Yorkers safe!



***Move Over Law***  
**expanded to include  
all stopped vehicles.**

## **Protecting New York's Energy Consumers**

No more surprise charges on your utility bills! A new law now in effect protects New Yorkers by ensuring energy providers further disclose any changes in price or contract terms and must get approval from the customer for any material new contract terms (Ch. 482 of 2023).

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# **Protecting New York's Energy Consumers**

# Community Resources

## **Free Admission to State Parks for New York State Veterans and Families**

The [Governor announced](#) that beginning on April 1, New York State veterans and Gold Star Families will have free access to New York State parks, campgrounds, day use areas, historic sites, and recreation areas through the expansion of the Lifetime Liberty Pass Program. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has created a [website](#) to guide veterans and families through eligibility questions, the application process and more. Once issued, the Lifetime Liberty Pass will never expire. This is a great way to honor the service of our veterans and their families and connect more people to the natural beauty and history of our NYS Parks!

# LIFETIME LIBERTY PASS

Lifetime access for New York State Veterans and Gold Star Parents, Spouses, and Children.



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

[parks.ny.gov](http://parks.ny.gov)

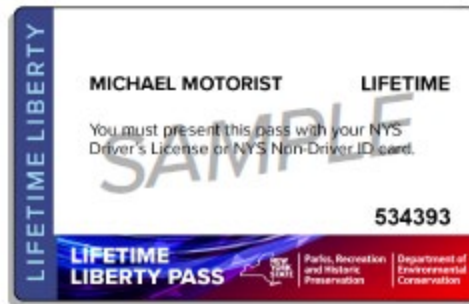
Department of Environmental Conservation

[dec.ny.gov](http://dec.ny.gov)

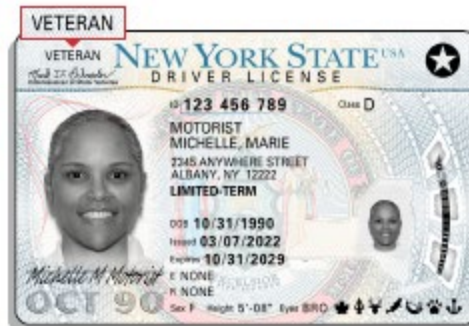


## What is the Lifetime Liberty Pass?

The Lifetime Liberty Pass allows New York State Veterans and Gold Star Parents, Spouses, or Children free or discounted use of state parks, historic sites, and recreational facilities.\*



Are you a Veteran with the VETERAN designation on your New York State ID? Your license can be used for admission at staffed locations!



Lansing Library Presents 4-part Series on Financial Education

The Lansing Community Library will present a 4-part series on financial education led by financial advisor Naya Sou on Wednesdays from 7-8 p.m. in April and May. Topics include the impact of the SECURE Act on your personal finances, fundamentals of estate planning, savings and investment accounts, and jumpstarting your retirement. Review [more information](#) and RSVP to [bobbiew@lansinglibrary.org](mailto:bobbiew@lansinglibrary.org) if you plan to attend.

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In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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