



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Praises New York State Budget for Commitment to Job Growth, Education, Mass Transit, Human Services and Fiscal Restraint

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR April 3, 2012

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Says Funding Plan Falls Short in Some Areas, but also Makes Wise Investments

Queens, NY, April 3, 2012 -- NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens), today called the final 2012-2013 New York State Budget enacted by the Legislature “a good game plan for jumpstarting job growth, enhancing educational opportunity, rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, helping our most vulnerable residents, and taking other important steps to improve the lives of New Yorkers while holding the line on wasteful state spending and high taxes.”

However, taking a line from “The Rolling Stones,” the Queens lawmaker added, “But despite all the good things in this budget, it’s just a fact of life: you can’t always get what you want. I am very pleased about many aspects of the reduced spending plan for this new fiscal year, while also realizing we still have serious fiscal issues in our state.”

Addabbo noted that the new State Budget, adopted prior to the April 1 deadline, closes a significant budget gap without large tax and fee increases, and holds state spending growth to two percent or less. In addition, the entire \$132.6 billion

spending plan – which includes state and federal dollars and other revenue – is down by \$135 million from last year. “I’m glad that we were able to address a serious budget deficit without completely decimating many programs of importance to all New Yorkers,” he said.

The Senator, who was appointed to serve as the representative of the Senate Democratic Minority Conference on the Joint Legislative Conference Committee on Education, expressed satisfaction that the total \$20.4 billion school aid package, up \$805 million from 2011-2012 levels, finally begins phasing in foundation aid again in an effort to provide equity for New York City schools and other underserved districts. “New York City schools will see an increase of \$292 million, as compared to a hike of only \$50 million last year, and the Contract for Excellence requirement remains in place to ensure accountability in our educational system,” said Addabbo. The Senator also mentioned the financial assistance to non-public schools through the allocations in the Comprehensive Attendance Program (CAP) funding, which was one of his budget priorities.

Addabbo also praised an appropriation of \$7 million for non-public schools in the budget, as well as increased funding for universal pre-kindergarten programs, funded at \$384.2 million, which is a boost of \$1 million over last year, and full-day kindergarten programs, which saw a \$1.8 million increase to \$6.8 million.

As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Libraries, Addabbo also had high praise for the \$4 million increase provided for library aid throughout New York, as well as a \$14 million capital construction program for libraries. “This is great news,” he said. “With one of the country’s preeminent public library systems located right here in Queens, we know first-hand the incredible value of libraries to our communities, and the many different roles they play in educating, entertaining and improving the lives of local residents.”

Addabbo also highlighted the additional \$31.3 million in support provided for community colleges across New York, including a needed base-aid increase, and the fact that general fund spending for SUNY and CUNY held steady without cuts. “I wish we could have found more resources, however, to significantly expand New York’s Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to better cushion the effects of last year’s tuition increases,” he said. “The \$28 million increase is welcome, but doesn’t put TAP where it needs to be.”

Pointing out the dual goals of providing new jobs for New Yorkers and fixing up the state's crumbling roads, bridges and other infrastructure, Addabbo expressed support for the New York Works Task Force, which will be charged with coordinating state agency capital plans and investing billions of dollars in projects across the state. "This will result in tens of thousands of good jobs for residents, and will include \$1.2 billion in new state and federal funding for bridge and road repair alone," Addabbo said. As part of this initiative, Rockaway and Broad Channel residents will be reimbursed for bridge tolls they have paid over the years.

As for the budget process, Addabbo complimented Governor Cuomo for providing fiscal leadership and acknowledged him as the reason for an on-time State Budget. "Whenever the governor offers legislators a choice between an on-time, efficient budget or the possibility of shutting down the state government, it's not really a choice at all. Nobody wins when our government is shut down and that is the primary reason why we have this early budget."

Other highlights of the new 2012-2013 State Budget cited by Addabbo include:

- \$770 million to provide full funding for the next phase of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) capital plan;

- Creation of the New York Gaming Commission, which will merge the State Division of the Lottery and the State Racing and Wagering

Board in an effort to take a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to the possible expansion of casino gambling in the state;

- \$30 million to help restore the original intent of New York's Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program and help needy seniors afford expensive prescription drugs;

- \$134 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which provides resources for environmental projects throughout the state;
- \$1.1 million for 25 new treatment beds for veterans through the State Office of Substance Abuse Services (OASAS);
- Increased aid for people with disabilities, including \$80 million, an increase of \$4 million, to aid pupils in Office of Mental Health/Office for People with Developmental Disabilities programs, and an \$11.5 million increase in funding, to \$163.5 million, for OPWWD capital projects.

“As pleased as I am with these wise investments in our state’s human and physical infrastructures – our people and our overall environment – I’m very disappointed that we dropped the ball in other areas,” said Addabbo. “We should have restored property tax relief for New Yorkers through STAR rebates. We should have provided promised insurance benefits to retirees of the now-defunct New York City Off-Track-Betting Corporation, who are now suffering deeply after losing their health coverage. And it’s a shame that New York City – which provides about half of all New York State tax revenues – isn’t receiving any AIM revenue-sharing funding. That’s just plain wrong and work should continue to address these issues beyond the budget.”

Now that the State Budget has been enacted, Addabbo pledged that he will continue during the remainder of the 2012 session to try to address these and other issues of importance to his district and the people of New York State as a whole. “Passage of a timely, responsible, and responsive budget was job number one,” he said, “but there is much more work to be done.”

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