



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein Launches IDC's 2014 Agenda – “Affordable NY”

JEFFREY D. KLEIN December 13, 2013

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IDC Introduces Innovative Programs Like Family Leave Insurance for Working Mothers and Fathers and Launches Mitchell Llama 2020; Agenda Re-Focuses State Resources on Working Families

#AffordableNY

BRONX, NY – In front of a raucous crowd of over 200 Bronx community leaders, activists, and residents, Senate Majority Coalition Leader Jeffrey D. Klein introduced the Independent Democratic Conference's 2014 legislative agenda: Affordable NY. The agenda demonstrates the IDC's commitment to working families during the 2014 legislative session.

Senate Co-Leader and Leader of the Independent Democratic Conference Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) said, "Heading into 2014, the Independent Democratic Conference will be championing the most critical needs of workers and retirees across New York. Our goal is to help the millions of middle class families who are struggling because of a slow economic recovery, a lag in essential services, and the skyrocketing costs of everyday life in New York. Basic necessities like child care, housing, and utilities are eating up too much of every New Yorker's paycheck. That needs to change, and Affordable NY is a comprehensive plan that helps us do exactly that. The IDC's agenda reinvests our state's resources into our greatest asset—New York's working people."

The IDC's Affordable NY 2014 proposals include:

Guaranteeing Working Parents Six Weeks of Family Leave Insurance

Today, New York workers are getting left behind states like California and New Jersey, where every worker is guaranteed at least six weeks of real, paid maternity and family leave. By guaranteeing New York workers these same benefits—and lifting New York's Temporary Disability Insurance benefit—working parents will finally be able to afford to take the time off they need to care for a new child or sick family member. New York State currently guarantees workers only \$170 per week, but under AffordableNY, maternity and family leave benefits will be immediately expanded and increased to \$450 per week in 2015 and a maximum of \$700 per week by 2018.

Launching Mitchell Llama 2020

New York's cities are facing critical shortages of affordable middle class housing. In order to meet these rising needs head-on, the IDC believes New York State should reinvest in one of New York's most historic and effective housing programs of the 20th century—Mitchell Llama. Mitchell Llama 2020 is a visionary new initiative that calls upon NYS to invest \$750

million over five years to restart New York's most successful middle class housing program.

Fully Funding Critical Daycare Subsidies and Tax Credits

New York families currently face some of the highest child care costs in the nation. These high-and rising--daycare costs not only devastate family budgets, they also push more and more parents to enroll their children in cheaper, unlicensed daycare centers that are beyond the reach of safety inspectors.

Providing \$300 Utility Relief Checks for Seniors and Expanding EPIC Eligibility

Gas, electric, and water bills are continuing to rise in New York, forcing seniors to make painful choices about where to spend. Affordable NY will provide every senior with short and long-term utility bill relief and will create a NYS Consumer Advocate Office to prevent unscrupulous overcharging by local and statewide utility providers. Affordable NY also calls for expanding income eligibility for seniors, so that New York delivers financial assistance to all seniors who need it most.

Encouraging College Graduates to "Study and Stay"

College graduates not only face sky-high loan payments, they also face increasingly unaffordable housing costs. The IDC's "Study and Stay" tax credit will allow all eligible graduates to receive an annual tax credit of \$5,000 each year for 10 years so they can one day invest that savings into a home.

Making College More Affordable for Students and Parents

The IDC's Affordable NY plan takes a three pronged approach to increasing college affordability: (1) doubling the current limits on 529 college savings accounts, (2) enabling parents and students to lock-in present day tuition rates at public and private colleges statewide, and (3) making up to \$20,000 in college savings tax deductible.

Creating an Education Investment Tax Credit for Public and Private Schools

When it comes to effectively educating our children, New York's schools need every dollar they can get. The IDC's Affordable NY plan encourages every New Yorker to give to their local public or private school by making finally making these donations tax deductible. In

order to make sure every dollar is spent fairly and effectively, tax deductible donations made to private schools must be used to fund scholarship opportunities that qualify.

Financial Relief for Commuters

Affordable NY creates tax incentives for employers to finally provide mass transit commuters with the federal tax credits they need and deserve. The IDC's plan also creates a toll relief tax credit, enabling NY toll-payers to deduct up to \$250 of their annual toll costs.

Protecting Homeowners Facing Foreclosure

In 2009, thanks to the efforts of Sen. Klein and his IDC colleagues, New York enacted some of the strongest homeowner protections in the nation, including a requirement that every lender meet with foreclosed homeowners face-to-face for a settlement conference prior to court proceedings. Affordable NY asks New York State to extend these strong homeowner protections and to help homeowners victimized by natural disasters by postponing mortgage payments for one year after a life-changing storm or flood.

Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn) said, "Affordable NY is a comprehensive plan that promises to make New York more affordable for working families. Our agenda dedicates state resources to the exact type of programs and services that working people and retirees need the most. By enacting family leave insurance, bringing down the cost of utilities, and renewing a generation's promise for affordable housing, we're helping build a brighter future for New York's middle class."

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland) said, "New Yorkers have always felt if they put in a hard day's work, they will be rewarded with the ability to afford the American dream. Giving families time to raise a newborn and making college more affordable need to be priorities in the next legislative session. These common sense proposals will go a long way toward making sure the residents of the Hudson Valley and all New Yorkers can achieve the American dream."

Senator David Valesky (D-Oneida) said, "The Affordable NY plan is a lifetime commitment to New York's working families. It is critically important to address issues that affect all New Yorkers; challenges in paying for child care, affording college and living on a fixed income after retirement are topics I hear about from constituents every day."

In this economy, workers need every dollar of every paycheck available. Paid family leave will allow workers to meet their family needs without jeopardizing their economic security,” **said Stuart Appelbaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU).**

“Older New Yorkers’ kitchen table economies are buckling under soaring utility and drug costs; they need the kind of utility rate relief and better access to more affordable prescriptions this plan carries,” **said Beth Finkel, State Director for AARP.** “We know family caregivers struggle with having enough time to provide the care their relatives depend on. This proposal helps change that for the better. AARP applauds Senator Klein’s leadership and the IDC for tackling these issues, which mean so much to so many New Yorkers.”

“Across New York State, child care is a critical work support for low income families – enabling parents to feel confident that their children are safe and well cared for while they work. Quality child care is also great way to build a strong foundation for New York’s next generation of learners and leaders. We strongly support the \$382 million investment proposed by the Senate Independent Democratic Conference in child care, particularly the restoration of \$82 million in funding to the New York State Child Care Block Grant, bringing it back to the 2010-2011 levels. This investment, together with an additional increased investment in facilitated enrollment, will restore subsidies to many desperate working families who have lost child care subsidies because of the cuts over the last few years.” - **Susan Antos, Senior Attorney with the Empire Justice Center**

Laura L. Anglin, president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, a statewide association for more than 100 private, not-for-profit New York State colleges and universities, said, "We applaud the recognition that higher education is a worthwhile investment for all New Yorkers. One of the best things we can do is to support the college aspirations of our next generation of leaders, who today can be found in high school classrooms across the state. CICU endorses programs and proposals that enable and support students and families in selecting the campus that best fits their academic potential."

Fr. Joseph M. McShane, S.J. President of Fordham University said, “I support Senator Klein's proposals to expand tuition tax credit and the creation of a N.Y.S. prepaid tuition plan, which will make college more affordable to those parents who partner in the program."

“Older New Yorkers spent years helping make New York the Empire State. Our moms, dads, aunts, uncles, and friends patrolled our streets, paved our roads and taught our children. Now in their golden-years, we need to take steps to help them enjoy the fruits of their labor,” **said Ann Marie Cook, President & CEO of Lifespan.** “I want to thank Senator Klein and the IDC for recognizing the pressures older New Yorkers face every day, and expanding EPIC is an important step to relieving the stress of having to deal with the rising costs of prescription

drugs. Lifespan fully supports Senator Klein's efforts to improve the quality of life of New York's seniors."

"The Early Care & Learning Council supports the restoration of \$82 million to the New York State Child Care Block Grant in order to meet the needs of families that have been enduring child care subsidy shortfall in recent years. Child care costs can often exceed the cost of housing and related household expenses for families, making access to child care subsidies a necessary mechanism to obtain quality care." - **David Voegelé, Executive Director**

"The increased investment in child care proposed by the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) rightly gives early care and learning the prominence it deserves in next year's budget. We are particularly appreciative that the IDC is including \$82 million in funding to the New York State Child Care Block Grant, and increased funding for facilitated enrollment. The restoration of child care funding to 2010-2011 levels is a core component of Winning Beginning's 2014-15 Executive Agenda. This investment will move New York closer to a comprehensive early learning system that promotes children's healthy social, emotional, cognitive and physical development and success in school and later life." - **Winning Beginning NY** *a statewide coalition of 36 organizations working to inform policy makers and the public about the many benefits of early care and learning including home visiting, child care and Pre-K.*

"Child care subsidies are a crucial economic support for working families striving to provide quality care for their children during the hours they are at work. While the majority of child care subsidies support care for younger children, approximately a third create opportunities for school-age children to be safe and engaged after school. The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) joins the Winning Beginning coalition in applauding the Independent Democratic Conference's call for \$82 million in additional subsidies to provide nurturing and enriching child-care and after-school for New York's children." - **Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Ph.D., Executive Director, New York State After School Network**

"The Education Investment Incentives Act exemplifies the concepts of parity and equality by providing financial incentives to those making donations to both public and non-public schools, thereby granting an equitable and affordable education to all children," **said Jeffrey Leb, NY Director of Political Affairs, Orthodox Union Advocacy Center**

Patricia Gabriel, President, Federation of Catholic Teachers, OPEIU Local 153, AFL-CIO said, "This plan will make education more affordable and save the jobs of our teachers who bring the kind of nurturing and excellent teaching that our children desperately need throughout the Archdiocese of New York and across New York State. We applaud Senator Klein's leadership on this important issue. We must ensure the quality education that our teachers and schools bring to Catholic and non-Catholic families alike."

“The New York Housing Conference looks forward to working with Sen. Jeff Klein and the Independent Democratic Conference in order to make additional funding available for the development of affordable housing in New York State”, **said Judy Calogero, CEO of the New York Housing Conference.** “We support housing for all in New York, and call on the Governor and the Legislature to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to basic, decent, and affordable shelter, whether in cities, suburbs, or rural areas; in houses, apartments, or manufactured homes; for old and young, renters and owners, singles and families, of all backgrounds.”

Jacob Inwald, Director of Foreclosure Prevention Litigation, Legal Services NYC/Legal Support Unit said, "The principles proposed today provide critically-needed relief for New York homeowners. Storms like Irene, Lee and Sandy have especially hurt communities already struggling through the foreclosure crisis. These proposals improve New York's homeowner protections, and will prevent foreclosures that are so damaging to both the affected families and the surrounding communities. Providing homeowners in disaster-stricken communities with the breathing room they need to get back on their feet and rebuild their lives and their homes benefits everyone, including the affected communities, lenders and New York's economy."

“New York City's bus and subway riders need a break, and we look forward to working with the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) to make commuting more affordable and safer,” **said Paul Steely White, from Transportation Alternatives.** “After working together with the IDC to bring a speed cameras to New York City, we look forward to working with them again in the coming legislative year to make our streets are safer for commuters while providing real relief to their wallets by reducing their public transit commuting costs.”

“The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce supports the efforts of State Senator Diane Savino and the Independent Democratic Conference to provide toll relief to New Yorkers through the toll tax credit. By providing a tax credit of up to \$250.00 a year to toll paying commuters, New York State is finally recognizing the burden that tolls have in attracting talent and creating jobs. This toll relief tax credit is a great first step towards a more fair and

equitable system,” said **Linda Baran Chair Staten Island Chamber of Commerce**

Bobby Digi, President, North Shore Business Association said, “We applaud the State tax credit idea to relieve part of the onerous burden on Staten Islanders who commute to work in other parts of NYC. The tolls have become a barrier to trade for Staten Island businesses and workers. Actually, we believe that the tax credit should be higher for Staten Islanders, but this is a good start. Consider that there are about 250 work days in a year, so even at the EZ Pass rate of \$6 per day, the total toll for the VZ Bridge alone is \$1,500! If you add other tolls that a Staten Island commuter may encounter, such as the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel and the JFK Bridge, the cost about doubles. Commuters in the four other boroughs can avoid bridge tolls and still commute borough-to-borough, except to and from Staten Island. We commend the efforts of our State Senator Diane Savino and urge all our elected representatives on Staten Island to go to bat for the Staten Island commuter and obtain scaled relief for us (the tax credit for Staten Island residents and workers should be higher), as compared to commuters in other parts of New York State who do not have such a crushing daily toll burden.”

“All Staten Islanders need help to relieve the burden of crushing tolls on those commuting to their place of work. Let's give some assistance to the working man and women where it is needed most,” said **Mike Morrell, President, Westerleigh Improvement Society, Staten Island's largest Civic association.**

“New York State’s REALTORS® know well the difficulties faced by first-time homebuyers in our state,” said **Duncan R. MacKenzie, CEO of the New York State Association of REALTORS®.** “Far too often accumulated college debt impedes the ability of hardworking young people to save for a down payment on a home to call their own and to afford our nation-leading closing costs. REALTORS® across the Empire State applaud the IDC’s new Study and Stay Tax Credit proposal as a creative way to encourage our college graduates to achieve the American Dream here in New York.”

CUNY Interim Chancellor William Kelly said, “The City University of New York serves predominantly low and middle-income New Yorkers who assure our State of both a vibrant and educated workforce as well as the tax base of the future. We look forward to working

with Senator Klein to assure that college affordability plans benefit our hard-working students and their families."

"Senator Klein's interest in college affordability is well founded. The issues are urgent. The College of Mount Saint Vincent will happily and eagerly work with the Senator, members of the Independent Democratic Conference, and all members of the State Legislature on good policies that address the issues of college affordability for New York families," **said Charles L. Flynn, President, College of Mount Saint Vincent**

Brennan O'Donnell, Ph.D., President of Manhattan College said, "NY colleges and universities are tremendous assets to the overall economic health and quality of life of NY, and have a proud history of being gateways of opportunity. Sen. Klein's proposals explore creative ways to assure that families will be able to invest in their children's future--and in the future of NY. "

Patricia Gabriel, President, Federation of Catholic Teachers, OPEIU Local 153, AFL-CIO said, "This plan will make education more affordable and save the jobs of our teachers who bring the kind of nurturing and excellent teaching that our children desperately need throughout the Archdiocese of New York and across New York State. We applaud Senator Klein's leadership on this important issue. We must ensure the quality education that our teachers and schools bring to Catholic and non-Catholic families alike."

Darla Romfo, President, Children's Scholarship Fund said, "Tax incentives to increase charitable contributions to both public schools and scholarship funds will allow more low-income New York families to give their children the educational tools and opportunities they need to succeed in the future. We support this program because it will improve education in New York and set an example for policymakers across the country."

Timothy McNiff, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Archdiocese of New York said, "Affordability of even modest tuition is increasingly out of reach for our low-income and middle class families who desire a quality education for their children. The Education Investment Tax Credit included in this plan is the 'game-changer' we need to help families afford the educational opportunity they so critically need and want for their children."

Rabbi Binyamin Krauss, Principal, SAR Academy said, "The Education Investment Tax Credit would offer assistance in providing education to children in need and would offer the donor a tax credit incentive to help others. Truly a win-win for all involved."

Igal Jellinek, Executive Director, Council of Senior Centers and Services said, "On behalf of the 300,000 older New Yorkers served by the Council of Senior Centers and Services (CSCS)

through its member agencies, we applaud Senator Jeffrey Klein and the IDC for seeking to enact legislation that makes aging in New York more affordable. Increasing the eligibility level of EPIC and assistance for those struggling to pay their utility bills would broaden the number of older New Yorkers who could afford to remain home. CSCS also supports the creation of a consumer advocate to speak out on behalf New Yorkers when utilities request a rate increase. We look forward to working with the IDC on these humane and pragmatic bills to ensure they are enacted."

"The Association on Aging in New York is supportive of expanding eligibility of the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program because so many of our seniors are on fixed incomes and depend on EPIC to help them manage the chronic illnesses that often come with age," **said Laura Cameron, Executive Director of the Association on Aging in NY**, which represents the state's 59 local area agencies on aging. "As for heating costs, winter in the northeast is problematic for New York's senior citizens who live on fixed incomes and struggle to cover the spike in utility bills during the coldest months. Providing short-term relief would help more seniors and fill a funding gap created by a lower appropriation of Home Energy Assistance (HEAP) funds from the federal government. Area Agencies on Aging throughout the state hear from seniors every day about the challenges they face paying for prescriptions and covering rising utility bills."