



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #12: Working Toward Another On-Time Budget

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 20, 2014

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION, HEALTH, RECREATION AND TOURISM, TRANSPORTATION, TAXES**



I want to pass a fourth on-time budget by April 1. So my colleagues and I recently outlined our priorities to provide a starting point for negotiations.

Here's what I'd like to see in this year's budget:

TAX RELIEF

I agree there's a need for property tax relief. That's why I want to make the property tax cap permanent and strengthen the STAR program.

The Senate is proposing a \$1.4 billion tax relief proposal for homeowners, plus reducing various taxes for businesses. Our plan also doesn't include any new taxes or fees.

EDUCATION

Our resolution calls for increasing education aid by \$811.9 million over the current fiscal year. Perhaps most importantly, it would return \$541 million to schools that was previously taken through Gap Elimination Adjustment. GEA should have never happened, and I'd like to see it phased out even sooner than the 2016-17 school year, as we've proposed.

We've rejected the governor's proposed \$4 million cut to library aid and added another \$4 million to this important resource.

HEALTH CARE

The governor's budget proposal cut funds for women's health initiatives, Alzheimer's Disease resources and maternity and early childhood help. I disagree, so I'm looking to restore those funds as well as increase funding for spinal cord injury research, rape crisis centers and the EPIC prescription drug program used by so many of our seniors.

AGRICULTURE

We recognize that New York farmers rely on outside research and expertise to become more efficient and waste less money. Our resolution includes restoring funds for the Farm Viability Institute, the Wine and Grape Foundation and Maple Producers Association, to name a few.

We've also included initiatives that will make it easier for farmers to pass their operations to a younger generation or for a young farmer to build from the ground up.

THE REST

Our resolution calls for investment in several local industries that will provide sustainable jobs in this 21st century economy, including \$10 million for the Clarkson-Trudeau Institute partnership and \$180 million for the Nano Utica project in Marcy.

I remain opposed to the raids on the state's highway and bridge fund. Our Senate resolution would prohibit further sweeps to pay for items outside road and bridge construction. I will also be pushing for additional Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs) funds to aid in our local public works projects.

Looking off road, our resolution calls for upping the weight limit on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) so that popular UTVs and side-by-sides can be legally registered here.

Tourists come from neighboring states to ride our trails and they pump money into our local economy. I believe sanctioning mixed martial arts fights in New York would have the same positive benefit, and I'm glad our Senate resolution calls for us to become the last state in the country to allow it.

Finally, we've used our resolution to remind the governor: The overwhelming majority of our constituents are opposed to providing taxpayer-funded college educations to state inmates. I'll be working with my colleagues to make sure that proposal does not become reality.