



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Announces End of Session Accomplishments in Albany

ANDREI VASILESCU June 24, 2016



**Queens, NY** - As the legislative session adjourns, State Senator Tony Avella announced several of the session's key accomplishments. In addition to the policies achieved during budget negotiations, the end of session continued a series of legislative victories, including ethics reform, increased access to tax abatements for middle class co-op and condo owners, increased access to breast cancer screenings, legalized and taxed fantasy sports betting, legislation combating the heroine epidemic, and more. Overall, Senator Avella passed a total of 50 bills through the Senate.

Senator Avella has long advocated for holding political consultants to disclosure requirements, arguing that these political operatives are “lobbyists in consultant’s clothing”. His bill was appropriated into the five point ethics reform passed at the end of session, and consultants doing business with elected officials or candidates for elected office will now be required to register with the state and disclose all of their clientele.

“Ethics reform was a major priority this legislative session, and although I hoped additional reforms would have passed, including more reforms for Albany itself, this was an important step in the right direction. I have been a longtime advocate of barring public officials from collecting their pension once they’ve been convicted of corruption, and I’m proud that this was one of the reforms we managed to pass. You can’t always prevent wrongdoing, but you can certainly discourage and punish it,” said State Senator Tony Avella.

Ethics reform included four other key provisions: Independent expenditure reforms to end coordination between political campaigns and stem the influence from ‘dark money’; Pension forfeiture that would strip the pension accrued by public officials once they’ve been convicted of corruption; Lobbying Disclosure Reforms, increasing fines and expanding on who must disclose information to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics; and, finally, reforms requiring 501(c)(4) organizations that engage in lobbying to disclose the sources of their funding.

Additionally, Senator Avella’s bill expanding access to the J-51 tax abatement for co-op and condo owners had also passed at the end of session. By increasing the threshold at which co-op and condo owners can be eligible for the tax abatement, more middle class New Yorkers will be able to get a tax break for renovations. One of Senator Avella’s 50 bills that passed the Senate, S893B, would have further assisted middle class co-op and condo owners by reclassifying co-op and condo tax assessments into a new and more equitable tax class, as opposed to its current classification shared with rental residential properties.

Concerning New York City schools the legislature successfully extended Mayoral Control by a year and implemented transparency requirements that would disclose individual school district budgets and make that information available to parents and the public.

The foreclosure crisis has left many communities with “zombie homes” that blight their communities and drop surrounding property of values. To combat the zombie properties throughout New York State, the legislature passed a series of measures that would require banks to maintain vacant and abandoned properties, establish a hotline for reporting abandoned homes, and establish a Consumer Bill of Rights to inform property owners of their rights during foreclosure.

“Zombie homes impact a communities quality of life, but they also drive down property values for homeowners who happen to neighbor them. They have been a chronic problem ever since the foreclosure crisis during the recession, and New Yorkers have been calling for an answer. As a result of this legislature’s actions, when these homes get stuck in the foreclosure process and are abandoned, banks will have to maintain them,” **stated Senator Avella.**

Funding for programs meant to combat the heroin epidemic throughout New York have also been allocated, allowing for expanded access to inpatient treatment, access to drug treatment, availability of the overdose-reversal medication naloxone, and required education training for doctors and prescribers on addiction and pain management.

“Too many parents have lost their children; Too many people have lost the ones they love. The heroin epidemic has ravaged New York, and it’s heartbreaking to see so many people struggle with addiction, even when they truly want to break free from it. This is not a problem that will be solved in the state capitol alone, and law enforcement is cracking down every day on this issue, but I am proud to announce that this legislature has expanded

treatment options and has made naloxone more available so that lives can be saved and second chances can be taken,” **said Senator Avella.**

Despite the effectiveness of screenings, including mammograms, for identifying breast cancer at early stages, inconvenient office hours and insurance hurdles have stood between women and these potentially life-saving procedures. The legislature has successfully passed legislation this session that will eliminate these insurance hurdles and increase screening hours at 210 mammography facilities. **Avella commented,** “When it comes to fighting breast cancer, early detection is a matter of life and death. This legislation will make mammography screenings more accessible, and in turn, save lives.

Among Avella’s 50 bills that passed the Senate, Avella’s famous Mute Swan bill intervening in the Department of Environmental Protection’s plan to eliminate the mute swan population passed both houses. Avella’s Machete bill also passed both houses, ensuring that an individual wielding a machete as a weapon with the intent to hurt someone could be charged with the criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree.

Other bills in Senator Avella’s 50 that passed the senate include Avella’s legislation to establish Saint Patrick’s Day as a school holiday, bills designating January 13th as Korean-American Day, a bill prohibiting the City from increasing property taxes if a property’s assessed value has decreased, and legislation expanding eligibility for public housing for veterans.

“Between the historic accomplishments achieved during this year’s budget negotiations and the sweeping victories achieved at the end of session, the 2016 legislative session was an immensely successful one. As always, there is still much more work ahead of us, and I look forward to returning next year to see that it gets done,” **concluded State Senator Tony Avella**