



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

From the Desk of Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan

JOHN J. FLANAGAN June 29, 2016



If the recently-concluded legislative session is remembered for one thing, it should be this: 2016 was the year the Legislature and Governor took significant steps to improve the overall quality-of-life for all of our residents.

Let's start with passage of the 2016-17 state budget.

At the insistence of Senate Republicans, it included a \$4.2 billion middle-class income tax cut the Empire Center for Public Policy called "the state's biggest and broadest personal income tax cut since the mid-1990s." By reducing middle-income tax rates by 20 percent, it will

ensure taxpayers can keep, save, and spend more of their hard-earned money, and allow cash-strapped parents to more comfortably provide for their families. In short, a better quality-of-life for hardworking taxpayers.

Senate Republicans were the driving force in providing back-to-back unprecedented increases in aid to education, and this year our schools will see a \$1.5 billion increase and an all-time record level of total funding. The budget completely eliminated the Gap Elimination Adjustment, or GEA, an unfair funding scheme created by New York City Democrats that hurt our schools. Over time, these resources will clearly help lower the property tax burden on our residents and improve the quality-of-life for today's students.

When it comes to transportation funding, Senate Republicans re-established parity so Upstate, the Hudson Valley, and Long Island will once again get its fair share. This will result in the vast improvement of roads and bridges throughout those regions, safer conditions for motorists and their families, and more construction-related jobs that boost the economy and help our families -- further increasing New Yorkers' quality-of-life.

In addition, we passed a landmark Paid Family Leave bill that reinforces the balance that should exist between work and family in all of our lives. When fully implemented, eligible employees will receive up to 12 weeks of paid leave to bond with a newborn or care for a sick family member without worrying about whether or not they will have a job to come back to. Definitely an improved quality-of-life for anyone with a family.

And, Senate Republicans also reached a number of signature agreements with our partners in government over the last few weeks of session.

The Legislature acted on a strong package of anti-heroin bills that will enhance coverage for those seeking treatment, expand access to addiction treatment opportunities, and extend the

length of time someone can receive life-saving services. This agreement builds on \$189 million in related funds we secured as part of the budget and previous legislation already approved by the Senate and Assembly. This overall effort is designed to combat the scourge of heroin that has torn apart many of our communities, and to give people help and hope, and a better quality-of-life.

Before we finished our business for the year, we passed legislation requiring school water to be tested for lead to protect the health of our kids, and made breast cancer screening, treatment, and care more affordable and accessible for millions of women across this state. Better quality-of-life? Check.

And finally, we took action to address so-called “zombie properties,” the prevalence of abandoned and decaying homes that lead to blight and depressed property values. This was a priority for Senator Jeff Klein, our majority coalition partner and leader of the Independent Democratic Conference. His work on this issue, and our partnership in getting it done, will improve the quality-of-life in each and every one of our communities.

When the book is written on the 2016 legislative session, major victories will be touted and celebrated.

Above all, we worked together to improve the quality-of-life for millions of hardworking New Yorkers and their families. That’s a legacy we can all be proud of.

John J. Flanagan,
New York State Senate Majority Leader