



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Senator Murphy finds silver lining in late budget

TERRENCE MURPHY April 10, 2017

| ISSUE: **BUDGET, CLEAN WATER, TUITION, MS4, RIDESHARING**



## THE 2017-18 STATE BUDGET

A Budget That Helps Families

ALBANY, NY - Late Sunday night the New York State Senate finally approved an agreed upon \$153 billion budget that honors the self imposed spending cap for the 7th year in a row. Amid criticism for failing to pass an on-time budget, lawmakers spent the past week and a half scrambling to build consensus over critical portions of the budget, going as far as passing the first budget extender since the days of Governor David Paterson.

State Senator Terrence Murphy said, "I remain very disappointed that we failed to pass an on-time budget. However, the approved budget delivers on several critical points that will

have a positive impact on all New Yorkers. Despite the frustrations of the past two weeks, there is a silver lining in the measures that we ultimately passed that I believe my constituents, and all New Yorkers, will benefit from."

### **Record Funding to Combat Heroin & Opioid Addiction**

Recent reports have showed that the fight against the heroin epidemic rages on. Both **New York City and Long Island have seen record numbers of deaths caused by overdoses** as well as staggering numbers of overdose saves. The 2017-18 budget makes New York's largest investment in this continued war with \$214 million being dedicated to helping some of the state's most vulnerable residents.

"As a former co-chair of the Senate's Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Abuse I have seen and heard firsthand the devastating pain this epidemic has caused all across our state. This record funding will go a long way in providing critical services to New Yorkers who continue to struggle with the terrible disease of addiction. I applaud my colleagues for increasing our commitment to saving the lives being affected by this scourge."

### **Delivering Ridesharing Services to the Hudson Valley**

Ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft are in high demand across New York State and especially the Hudson Valley. Senator Murphy supported the Senate's initiative to bring ridesharing to all New Yorkers earlier this year. Included in the budget are provisions that will allow these companies to operate statewide beginning in July.

"Bringing companies like Uber and Lyft to the Hudson Valley and the rest of New York State is a common sense decision that will benefit residents in a number of different ways," Senator Murphy explained. "These services will bring new jobs as well as additional transportation options that New Yorkers will be able to utilize and enjoy."

## Historic Funding for Clean Water Initiatives

The 2017-18 budget included the largest investment in state history for clean water. With an initial commitment of \$2.5 billion, New York State is finally investing the necessary dollars to address the wide array of water infrastructure issues many communities grapple with.

Earlier this year, Senator Murphy was joined by elected officials from all levels of government to bring attention to the water infrastructure needs in the 40th Senate District.

In addition to the clean water funding, the Environmental Protection Fund will receive a second year funding of \$300 million, which is the most in its history.

"There are two things in life you cannot live without: oxygen and water," Senator Murphy explained. "I have heard from nearly all of the municipalities within the 40th Senate District, and there is an incredible need for state funds to help us ensure our drinking water is clean as well as address other wastewater and stormwater issues. This is an issue I have been talking about in the Senate since I first arrived three years ago, and by working with my colleagues this year, I am very excited to see New York State allocate these funds."

In addition to clean water funds the program also establishes a septic system replacement fund. The fund is geared toward reimbursing homeowners up to 50% of the costs for replacing their outdated septic system. Counties across the state, especially those in the Hudson Valley, will be able to work with eligible property owners to address failing septic systems including the required inspections under the current MS4 mandate.

"In order to comply with these mandates some municipalities in the Hudson Valley were facing a 40% tax hike over the next five years," Murphy explained. "In the tax cap era that is unacceptable, and now New York State is offering a helping hand to partner with our counties and homeowners in a way that will ultimately protect our water, protect our environment and protect our property values without asking homeowners to pay large sums

of money to replace their failing septic systems."

### **Protections for Proposed Indian Point Closure**

The proposed closure of Indian Point has also been on the minds of residents within the 40th Senate District. Last month, **the Senate's one-house budget advanced language that would address a number of concerns** voiced to Senator Murphy during the two hearings he participated in. Now, most of those provisions have been approved as part of the final budget, and will be overseen by Governor Cuomo's task force of which Senator Murphy is a member.

"The time for finger pointing is over," Senator Murphy said. "There is a lot of work that needs to be done in advance of the 2020 and 2021 time frames that have been proposed for the closure of Indian Point. I sincerely hope the task force will be able to undertake the important work it has been given because we are talking about the impact this will have on real lives. Putting together another dog and pony show won't cut it."

The task force will now oversee and produce a study by April 30, 2018, that will evaluate the future reuse and reutilization options of the land where the facility is located. Further, on the same date a comprehensive assessment will be released that addresses future employment opportunities for affected workers in their current trade. Lastly, the Hendrick Hudson School District has been given the authorization to establish a reserve fund that will allow them to prepare and mitigate for the potential loss of tax revenue.

### **Historic Expansion of Tuition Assistance Program**

Despite the rhetoric by some lawmakers, the approved budget takes substantial steps forward in making college more affordable in New York State. The approved provisions are a responsible way to help young New Yorkers and middle class families afford a college

education by expanding the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) by more than \$1 billion.

"College affordability is reaching a crisis level," Senator Murphy explained. "We now have more college debt in America than credit card debt. I believe the provisions we approved provide a strong step in the right direction to allow more of the next generation of New Yorkers to obtain a college education which is a pivotal need in order to join today's workforce."

The final product includes a number of measures to address responsibility and accountability for qualifying students. Students who receive the maximum financial assistance, which does not cover the entire tuition cost for CUNY/SUNY schools nor does it include room and board, must meet certain GPA requirements and live in New York for at least four years upon graduation.

"Nothing these days, especially a world class college education, is free," Senator Murphy quipped. "This plan will significantly expand financial assistance opportunities to more middle class families all while making sure our students have some skin in the game and fulfill certain obligations to remain compliant. I believe the final product is a fair program that will ultimately give everyone the opportunity to succeed."

### **Additional Components**

Other positive aspects of the budget included the first reforms to New York's workers compensation system in a decade. These revisions are estimated to reduce costs for businesses, not-for-profits and municipalities by hundreds of millions of dollars while continuing to protect workers. Building on New York's commitment to public education, the budget increased funding for school aid by 4% which translates to more than \$1 billion. This increase raises New York's total investment in education to \$25 billion, and ensures every school district in the 40th Senate District received an increase in Foundation Aid. Direct care

workers will also be receiving a much deserved raise to the tune of \$55 million that will be fully phased in by April of 2018.

"No budget is perfect, especially New York's," Murphy continued. "The process we have endured over the past few weeks was unacceptable mostly due to the insertion of public policy into a budgetary process. Ultimately, the end result does advance a number of important initiatives that will help give all New Yorkers an opportunity to succeed. As always, the devil is in the details, but I will remain vigilant to protect the hard earned tax dollars of all New Yorkers from undeserving or devious individuals."