



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Mayer and Otis: A Very Productive Year in the NYS Legislature [Patch]

SHELLEY B. MAYER September 13, 2019

| ISSUE: **ELECTION REFORM, MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION, VAPING**



NYS Assemblyman Steve Otis called it "an exciting time to be in state government," as he and NYS Senator Shelley Mayer recapped key legislative initiatives at the Local Summit breakfast program on September 10. Otis noted that NYS has often led the nation on key issues and this year Albany passed a lot of legislation that is "either first or strongest in the nation." Mayer called it a **"fantastic session in Albany"** with a lot accomplished, in part due to having a Democratic majority in both houses.

Mayer highlighted a number of reforms passed by the NYS legislature which are intended to increase the number of people who vote, improve transparency, and reduce costs. They include: early voting; consolidating state and local primaries on the same day; authorizing use of electronic poll books; approving pre-registration of youth in advance of their 18th birthday, effective in 2020; moving towards implementing absentee voting without an excuse and automatic voter registration, although these will require more time to implement; and in the area of campaign finance reform, removing the "LLC loophole."

Looking ahead, Otis and Mayer noted that the proposed legalization of marijuana for adult recreational use is still under consideration. While criminal justice equity issues are driving the push for legalization, Mayer, who is chair of the Senate Education Committee, pointed out that the school community has raised very serious concerns about vaping and the risks associated with the legalization of marijuana. Mayer believes that the recent deaths from vaping will likely impact the debate and cannot predict the outcome.

In closing, asked how members of the audience could help them with their work, Mayer and Otis urged everyone to speak up and share their feedback and concerns with them.