



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jessica Ramos

Ramos: This is an austerity budget that will starve our neighbors and fill our jails

JESSICA RAMOS April 3, 2020



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NYS Budget Update

Albany, NY – Senator Jessica Ramos, chair of the Senate Labor Committee, today announced the New York State Legislature approved the SFY 2020-21 budget. She issued the following statement:

“This budget contained some needed help for New Yorkers struggling to make ends meet. I fought for and won the legalization of e-bikes and e-scooters, paid sick leave for all employees prevailing wage for construction workers and crucial funding for my neighbors.

We are in the midst of a public health crisis. We failed to help New Yorkers in need, who need the government to help them — now more than ever. We had a chance to raise taxes on wealthy New Yorkers and help weather this storm. Instead of cutting Medicare we could have used that money to fund public hospitals and education. We could have funded relief for unemployed or underemployed New Yorkers who can't pay their rent. We could have expanded assistance to small businesses. The uses are endless. Instead this is an austerity budget filled with regressive legislation that will starve our neighbors and fill our jails.

I will continue fighting for New Yorkers through this legislative session and I hope our neighbors will hold onto the promise that we still have many victories to claim as we get through this difficult time together.”

Although this is not an exhaustive list, Ramos details wins and losses from the budget:

Wins:

- Legalized e-bikes and e-scooters.
 - Our frontline workers can now safely ride to work or deliver food to our neighbors without fear of being saddled with hefty fines.
- Paid sick leave for NY employees
 - All employees in New York now have guaranteed paid sick leave for five to seven days. This builds upon the paid sick leave law Senator Ramos passed two weeks ago for employees who are under precautionary and mandatory COVID-19 quarantine orders.
- Prevailing wages for construction workers

- We are protecting construction workers—who are both literally and figuratively building New York from the ground up—by holding private construction companies whose projects are at least partially publicly funded accountable. They are now required to provide workers a living wage and benefits.
- Fracking ban
 - Encouraging alternative green energy practices by banning fracking protects residents from the chance of increased air pollution, groundwater contamination, surface water pollution and future health problems.
- Styrofoam ban
 - With many alternatives, continued use of styrofoam is harmful to your health, the planet and wildlife. Styrofoam is non-recyclable and toxic, by banning it we decrease the impact of carcinogens and methane gas in our environment.
- Increasing funding for unemployment
 - The COVID-19 pandemic created wage uncertainty for many employers and employees. The expansion of Unemployment Benefits addresses the ever growing need of New Yorkers unsure of when they will return to work.
- Environmental funding in the “Restore Mother Nature”
 - The harmful impact of climate change can be seen across the state. Authorizing funding to protect New York’s environment and natural resources establishes climate change protections for residents.

- \$3 billion appropriation:
 - \$1 billion for restoration and flood risk reduction
 - \$700 million for climate change mitigation
 - \$550 million for open space land conservation and recreation
 - \$550 million for water quality improvement and resilient infrastructure
- Increased allocations for CUNY
 - Increased funding for CUNY programming that supports the great diversity represented by the student population gives immigrant, first-generation and underrepresented college students the opportunity to succeed.
- Additional:
 - \$20,000 for CUNY Citizenship Now
 - \$250,000 for the CUNY Pipeline Center at the Graduate Center.
 - Additional funds for organizations that serve neighbors in Queens.
 - \$44,000 for the Queens Chamber of Commerce
 - \$10,000 for the Queens Public Library
 - \$150,000 for the Association of Community Employment Program
 - \$ 8,000 for Elmcour Youth and Adult Activities, Inc
 - \$ 50,000 for Apicha
 - \$ 90,000 for Make the Road New York
 - \$75,000 for Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens\$ 150,000 for National Association of Social Workers-NYC Chapter

Losses:

- Our state government needs revenue and the people who depend on state programs and state funded services are going to suffer. Senator Ramos voted no on the revenue bill (S.7509) because it did not include common sense ways to raise revenue by increasing taxes on the ultra wealthy individuals and corporations who can afford to pay just a little more.. It also omits a proposal to reduce the tax burden on small businesses.
- Senator Ramos voted no on ELFA (S.7506) because it dramatically rolls back bail reform and will send more New Yorkers to jail at a time when we should reduce our jail population, not expand it. It also lacked any increase in Foundation Aid needed by teachers and students across the State.
- Years of disinvestment from the City, State and Federal governments have left NYCHA in the state it is in today. The budget did not include any increase in capital funding for NYCHA's public housing capital repairs and restorations. Almost half a million New Yorkers are living in deplorable conditions and we've yet to provide the funds to correct for this.
- Medicaid cuts to public hospitals- Hospitals and their workers are at the front lines, seen in their amazing COVID-19 response. We cannot praise hospital staff and also slash the already limited Medicaid that supports their essential work.
- Public Transit Bans/Subway Offenders -This policy will grant courts the ability to ban individuals who are convicted of a crime involving unlawful sexual conduct or assault in or on an MTA asset for up to three years. How will these individuals be able to access crucial services that are court ordered if they don't have access to public transportation.

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