



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef Join Riverkeeper & Environmental Advocacy Groups to Tout Environmental Investments in the State Budget

ELIJAH REICHLIN-MELNICK March 28, 2022



OSSINING, NY - Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick (D-Rockland/Westchester) and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef (D-Westchester/Putnam) gathered at the Ossining waterfront with Riverkeeper, Scenic Hudson, and many other environmental advocates and local officials to celebrate the environmental initiatives in the budget proposal and to urge that this funding be included in the final state budget.

Officials are confident that voters will be asked to flip over their November ballots to vote on the Environmental Bond Act. The Senate, Assembly, and Governor all agree that there needs to be a multi-billion dollar Environmental Bond Act on the ballot in November. The Senate put forward the largest proposal totalling \$6 billion which includes at least \$4 billion that will be directed to tackling climate change over the coming years.

All parties also agree that the Environmental Protection Fund should be increased from \$300 million to \$400 million. Exactly how the additional \$100 million is allocated will be determined during budget negotiations over the coming week.

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Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick commented, “This budget proclaims in no uncertain terms that New York State takes seriously the need for unprecedented investment in environmental initiatives that will combat climate change and protect our communities for the next generation. I am fighting hard with many of my colleagues to ensure that the final budget includes \$400 million Environmental Protection Fund, a \$6 billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act, and an increased allocation of \$2 million for the DEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program to help local governments make evidence-based decisions about land-use and development.”

Assemblywoman Sandy Galef remarked, “I am proud to support the inclusion of New York’s Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act in this year’s Assembly Budget proposal. If approved by voters in November, this measure would further enhance New York’s ambitious climate commitments and create 100,000 green jobs by providing more funding for open space land conservation and recreation projects, restoration and flood risk reduction programs, climate change mitigation projects, and wastewater infrastructure and municipal stormwater projects. We know we have to take action now to mitigate increasingly severe weather events due to climate change and also transition to a new way of doing things that places less strain on our environment. Approval of the Bond Act would further bolster *h*ur

efforts as a state.”

Town Supervisor Dana Levenberg commented, “It is appropriate that we are gathered here at the Ossining waterfront on the Hudson River, where we are acutely aware of what the risks associated with climate change, like flooding and sea level rise, pose for our communities. State funding through the Environmental Protection Fund has enabled the Town to implement important environmental programs like our food scrap recycling program to take food waste out of the regular waste stream, electric vehicles for our Town fleet and EV charging stations, and many more. We all love our Hudson River waterfront parks and public spaces. We need to do the work necessary, with financial support from the State, to sustain our environment for generations to come so we can continue to enjoy these wonderful open space assets, plus clean air and clean water.”

Riverkeeper President Tracy Brown said, “Hudson River communities deserve clean water, clean air, and a safe environment which is why the investments proposed in the state budget are vital to ensuring we have the funding necessary to get there. A \$6 billion environmental bond act, if approved by legislators and ultimately by voters in November, will improve the environment and quality of life for years to come in our communities and create tens of thousands of jobs. To make the most of this opportunity, adding \$2 million to the Hudson River Estuary Program in this year’s budget is essential to ensure our communities have the support they need in order to access future funding. I want to thank Senator Reichlin-Melnick, Assemblymember Galef, and local elected officials for supporting these critical environmental funding proposals in the budget.”

Suzie Ross, Chairperson and co-founder of Green Ossining remarked, “We can no longer wait for bold commitments to environmental protection because they translate directly to ensuring a resilient and climate adaptive State for NY residents, and to that end we applaud our legislators for their support of the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Bond Act. We also

applaud the support of a \$400M Environmental Protection Fund and hope that The Hudson River Estuary Program—a program that engages and educates stakeholders in developing and achieving conservation goals—can be allotted a \$2million increase that will allow for the expansion of their successful programs, ramp up climate resiliency efforts, and launch new initiatives including a first-of-its-kind thorough assessment of Hudson River water quality. As a community-based grassroots organization, we know the value of good environmental policy. The Estuary Program provides the education and tools for community members to be engaged and step up to become better environmental stewards so that the work is not left to policy alone, offering residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to become better environmental advocates.”

Andy Bicking, Director of Government Relations and Public Policy for Scenic Hudson said,

"Hudson Valley residents have a deep and abiding commitment to a healthy environment and to the Hudson River. Local communities have taken responsibility for caring for their parks, increasing access to the river, and developing innovative solutions to climate change," said "Thanks to the leadership of the Hudson Valley's legislative delegation, we have an opportunity to secure additional resources to create new destinations like the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail through a \$250 million Parks Capital Fund, care for the river through the state's Environmental Protection Fund, and invest in our children's future through the Clean Air, Clean Water and Jobs Environmental Bond Act.”

Gale Pisha, Co-chair of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter's statewide Legislative Committee, said,

"Sierra Club stands with Senator Reichlin-Melnick, Assemblymember Galef and these environmental partners in supporting a \$400 million Environmental Protection Fund, comprehensive freshwater wetlands protections, and the Hudson River Estuary Program. We applaud the Senate and Assembly for proposing increased funding for the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act, and we stress the urgency of including wetlands

protection in the final budget."

Matt Salton, Environmental Action Coordinator for Hudson River Sloop Clearwater said, "A healthy Hudson River means a healthy New York State. We urge the Legislature and the Governor to approve these appropriations so that the State and the Estuary Program have the funds they need to ensure clean water is accessible to the people in the Hudson River Watershed. The Sloop Clearwater has been sailing the Hudson since 1969 and has seen the remarkable transformation of the river since then, first with the passage of the Clean Water Act. The next step in that progress is to allocate the funds from the Bond Act and from this budget to ensure that the river stays clean for the next generation of New Yorkers. We want to thank Senator Reichlin Melnick and Assemblywoman Galef for their continued advocacy and leadership in supporting these vital initiatives."