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**SUMMARY OF 2014 SENATE**

**LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

**2014-2015 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET**

The New York State 2014-15 state budget clearly reflects the Senate Republican Conference’s key goal of working together in a bipartisan way to give everyone the opportunity to succeed. The budget delivers on priorities outlined by the Senate Republicans including: more than $1.1 billion in additional aid to schools that is distributed fairly across the state; additional property tax relief for hardworking families; increased funding to help young New Yorkers afford college; tax cuts to help businesses create new job opportunities; and comprehensive ethics and election reforms.

This is the fourth consecutive on-time State Budget and it’s also the fourth consecutive budget that reduces taxes and keeps overall spending growth below two percent. The budget reflects the Senate Republican’s commitment to spending restraint -- we fully recognize that the only way to reduce the tax burden on New Yorkers is to control spending.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2014-2015 BUDGET**

**PROPERTY TAX RELIEF**

Senate Republicans have a long and successful history of fighting for property tax relief. New York’s hardworking families will see substantial property tax relief from the 2014-15 state budget, including a record amount of funding for the STAR program -- $3.4 billion, that includes $905 million in relief through the Enhanced STAR program for senior citizen homeowners -- and $1.5 billion in relief over the next three years from a new property tax freeze program.

**New Property Tax Rebates** – The new property tax rebate program will provide relief to taxpayers in school districts and municipalities that stay within the two-percent property tax cap and submit efficiency plans to the state that result in local cost savings of at least one percent or have already implemented cost reduction plans at the local level.

As many as 2.8 million property taxpayers outside New York City will receive property tax rebate checks this October and in 2015 and 2016 as a result of this program which will encourage communities to keep property taxes under control.

It’s projected that the property tax freeze program will provide $344 million in property tax relief in 2014-15; $810 million in 2015-16; and $347 million in 2016-17.

**Record STAR property tax relief** – The 2014-15 State Budget includes a record amount of $3.4 billion in property tax relief from the STAR program. That includes $905 million in relief through the Enhanced STAR program for senior citizen homeowners. New York City residents who fund schools through income taxes will see $611 in tax relief.

**CUTTING TAXES, CREATING JOBS**

The Senate Republican Conference wants to help New York businesses compete, grow and create new jobs. That’s why the State Budget includes key elements of our Tax Policy Review and Reform Initiative. The final 2014-15 state budget includes the following business tax relief and economic development measures:

**Lower Taxes on Businesses** – The budget includes major new tax cuts for businesses throughout the state. The corporate income tax rate is reduced from 7.1 percent to 6.5 percent; for manufacturers, the rate is reduced to zero. The alternative minimum tax is eliminated and the tax on capital base is phased out over six years.

**Reducing Energy Taxes** – The budget further reduces the 18-a energy surcharge by an additional $100 million for commercial and industrial users over the next three years, providing our energy intensive manufacturing sector with major savings.

**Manufacturer’s Property Tax Credit** – The budget incorporates a 20 percent property tax credit which will save manufacturers $100 million each year to help them reduce their cost of operations.

**Expanded Job Training Program** – The budget provides $5 million for the Next Generation NY Job Linkage Program that works with employers to: identify the job, define the skill; and provide training for it.

**SUNY 2020, CUNY 2020 Economic Development programs –** The 2014-15 budget allocates$55 million to each university system for the next round of SUNY 2020 and CUNY 2020 programs to provide competitive grants for projects that drive economic development and academic excellence.

**Elimination of the Additional Minimum Personal Income Tax –** The budget repeals the additional minimum personal income tax. Provisions like the add-on minimum tax make the state’s tax code unnecessarily complex and burdensome.

**Tax Deduction for Length of Service Awards –** The Budget allows retired volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers to deduct the value of length of service awards from their incomes for the purposes of the personal income tax.

**AID TO EDUCATION**

Senate Republicans fought to increase school aid by $1.1 billion, bringing total support for public schools to $22.1 billion. The budget distributes school aid fairly and equitably across the state, will help reduce pressure on local property taxpayers, provides additional support for charter schools and for early education programs, and makes important changes to address serious concerns raised about the Common Core program.

*Education highlights of the 2014-15 State Budget include the following:*

**GEA** – The Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) was an unfair school aid cut imposed by Democrats in 2010 when they controlled all three branches of government. Every Senate Republican voted no on the GEA, which has cost school districts to lose significant state aid.

Due largely to the Senate Republican Conference, the state is reducing the GEA by $602 million in this year’s budget - the single largest reduction in the GEA since it was implemented over our objections.

**Common Core Delay** -- The budget includes a two-year delay on the use of the controversial common core testing for grade promotion decisions for children from third to eighth grades and measures to eliminate unnecessary standardized testing to focus more classroom time on teaching, rather than testing. The budget also includes strict data protection provisions to protect student privacy.

**Pre-K Funding** -- In addition, the budget includes $1.5 billion over the next five years for statewide funding of Pre-Kindergarten programs. Aid will be provided to districts statewide that elect to provide state-of-the-art innovative Pre-K programs for at least five hours per day.

**Charter Schools** -- The budget provides additional aid to charter schools over the next three years: $250 per student in 2014-14; $350 in 2015-16; and $500 in 2016-17. Charter schools will also be eligible for Pre-K funds. The budget also recognizes that local districts will be held harmless from any additional costs associated with charters in their communities.

**Technology Bond Act –** Voters will decide this fall on a proposed$2 billion bond act to fund technological improvements in schools including broadband expansion and new technology for student use in classrooms.

**AID TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

> Overall state operating support for the state’s public university systems is increased by $178 million for SUNY and $104 million for CUNY.

>New rounds of economic development grants for the SUNY 2020 and CUNY 2020 programs are created. Each university system will receive $55 million for projects that target academic success, more job opportunities for students and new public-private partnerships.

> Base aid support is increased by $75 for each full-time equivalent student, which represents a total increase of $15.1 million for SUNY and CUNY community colleges.

> Funding for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is increased by $34 million, to help more young New Yorkers afford the cost of a higher education.

**TRANSPORTATION AID**

The budget provides critically important funding for roads, bridges, and transit. The unprecedented new investments in our state’s infrastructure and transportation not only improves the quality of life for all New Yorkers, but also keeps our economy moving.

**Local Road Improvement Funding**: The budget sustains record-level funding of $438 million for the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs). These investments will benefit counties, cities, towns, and villages throughout New York and help municipalities undertake new infrastructure repair projects.

**Capital Transportation Projects**: The budget includes $3.7 billion to be used to improve roads, and bridges, as well as projects in rail, aviation, and transit.

**Filling Potholes**: The brutal winter resulted in a significant number of potholes and road surface damage. It also depleted local budgets for repairs. This budget provided $40 million in capital for municipalities.

**Investing in Public Transit:** The budget includes a total of $178.7 million for upstate public transit. That is an increase of $5.1 million. The increase includes $2.8 million which represents the first year of a new initiative that will provide annual aid increases to assist upstate transit now, and in the future.

The budget includes $4.91 billion for mass transit, including $4.34 billion for the MTA, which is an $85 million increase in operation aid. It also includes $290 million for the downstate non-MTA systems.

In addition to these initiatives, the state budget provides ways to keep our roads and drivers safe. More funding is going towards curtailing dangerous texting-while-driving. Young and new drivers convicted of texting-while-driving will have their licenses suspended for 120 days for the first offense, and a year for the second offense.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

The state budget that helps protect and enhance New York’s natural resources and invests in key environmental initiatives that create jobs, increase tourism, and benefit communities throughout the state. The budget includes a $9 million increase to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), bringing the total to $162 million, while also making significant investments in improvements to state park facilities and environmental infrastructure.

The increase in the EPF will boost funding for important capital projects that protect the environment and enhance communities. The EPF helps protect open spaces; restore historic sites; conserve farmland; restore habitat; control invasive species; improve water quality; and create and enhance parks, among other projects.

The budget also includes two important investments from the NY Works program, which provides billions of dollars to rebuild the state's roads, bridges, parks, and other infrastructure and helps create jobs. State park facilities and historic sites will receive $92.5 million to make much-needed repairs and improvements. An additional $40 million will support projects to repair the deteriorating conditions of aging environmental infrastructure, such as flood control, wastewater systems and recreational facilities.

Other provisions in the 2014-15 budget will help support tourism and recreation in the state, including:

- $6 million for 50 new projects to provide recreational access to approximately 380,000 acres of existing state lands;

- $4 million for upgrades and improvements to fish hatcheries;

- Reduces short-term fishing license fees and creates 10 days of promotional prices for sporting licenses;

- Authorizes crossbow hunting for small game and for big game throughout firearms seasons and during portions of archery season for hunters 14 years of age or older, in all counties north of Westchester;

- Increases the number of state-authorized free fishing days offered each year from two to eight; and

- Creates free or discounted adventure license holders for new and existing lifetime sporting and park license holders.

**HEALTH CARE**

The 2014-15 state budget provided record support for a wide array of lifesaving health care services in communities across the state. Among the provisions in the budget were billions of dollars to ensure quality hospitals and nursing home facilities, funding for women’s and family health initiatives, a significantly expanded EPIC program to help our seniors afford their prescription medications, and new legislation to help eliminate “surprise” out-of-network medical bills.

**Investments in Health Care Facilities and Patient Care -** The budget makes a $1.2 billion capital investment over seven years for the restructuring of health care facilities such as hospitals, clinics and nursing homes. This is in addition to the $8 billion in funds from the federal Medicaid waiver for transformative projects to improve the health care system. To improve medical technology, the budget also includes $95 million to create a statewide electronic medical record system. These and other investments will enhance the quality, financial viability and efficiency of New York’s health care delivery system to ensure that New Yorkers continue to have access to quality health care services.

**Expanding EPIC and Support for Seniors -** New York’s Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage program will be expanded to cover the prescription drug needs of more New Yorkers. Income eligibility is expanded from $35,000 to $75,000 for singles and from $50,000 to $100,000 for married seniors. Approximately $4.1 million in increased funding will be used to help expand the program by 10 percent – providing coverage to an additional 25,000 senior citizens across New York.

Other funding initiatives that help support New York’s senior citizens include:

- $5 million for the Community Services for the Elderly Program such as transportation assistance, respite care, and home delivery meals;

- $875,000 for Elder Health / Alzheimer’s Programs;

- $200,000 for the Lifespan for Elderly Abuse, Education and Outreach;

- $86,000 for the New York Foundation for Seniors Home Sharing and Respite; and

- $31,500 for the Senior Action Council Hotline.

**Substantial Funding for Health Initiatives -** The new budget includes funding for a number of important individual and family health initiatives including:

- $25.3 million for Cancer Services Programs;

- $26.3 million for Nutritional Information for Women, Infants and Children;

- $2.3 million for the Prenatal Care Program;

- $4.5 million for Maternal and Child Health;

- $550,000 for Women’s Health Services;

- $533,300 for the Adelphi Breast Cancer Support Program;

- $1.8 million for the Prenatal and Postpartum Home Visitation Program;

- $34,700 for the Safe Motherhood Initiative;

- $10.6 million for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention;

- $1.8 million in increased funding for Rape Crisis Centers, bringing total funding to $3.6 million;

- $5 million in additional funding for the Spinal Cord Injury Research Board, bringing the total funding to $7 million;

- An additional $2.5 million for the Doctors Across New York Program;

- $2.45 million for initiatives to provide prevention, treatment and addiction services to address the growing problems of heroin and opioid abuse; and

- $500,000 for Lyme and tick-borne disease initiatives.

**Protecting Consumers from Unexpected “Surprise” Out-of-Network Medical Bills -** The budget includes legislation to protect consumers from surprise medical bills from physicians who are not in their insurance plan’s network.  A new dispute resolution process, network adequacy requirements, claim submission requirements, and improved disclosure by insurers and providers will help consumers better navigate the insurance process and reduce the incidence of costly, surprise bills.

**Safe Patient Handling Act -** Nurses and other direct patient care workers in health care facilities are often, as part of their jobs, required to move and lift patients, leaving them and the patients they care for susceptible to injury. The budget includes measures to promote safe patient handling and reduce the incidence of such injuries. Health care facilities are required to establish a facility specific safe patient handling program and conduct an annual performance evaluation of the program. A safe patient handling workgroup established within the Department of Health (DOH) will identify, and DOH will disseminate, best practices and other materials to assist facilities in the establishment of the programs. The Department of Financial Services is also required to establish a means, through regulation, whereby facilities that establish a safe patient handling program may obtain a reduced worker’s compensation rate.

**Donate Life Registry -** To encourage more people to save lives through organ and tissue donation, the budget includes changes to the operation of the state’s Donate Life Registry. The changes require the commissioners of Health, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Board of Elections to examine steps that may be taken by the state agencies to enhance the registry’s performance. The enacted provisions also require the selection of a not-for-profit organization experienced in working with procurement organizations and affiliated with New York’s donation community to permanently operate and promote the Registry.

**Early Intervention Payments -** The state budget provides $163 million for early intervention programs, which offer a variety of therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The Senate Republican Conference also succeeded in obtaining an allocation of $3.9 million in this budget to immediately reimburse the provider’s for unpaid claims made between April 1, 2013 to June 30, 2013, when the state’s early intervention program first began requiring insurance claims to be completed before the state and local shares would be paid.

**AGRICULTURE**

The budget provides millions to support and strengthen New York State’s leading industry: agriculture. The 2014-2015 state budget includes $8 million in new budget funding -- the highest level in six years. Funding will go to farming programs and initiatives, as well as towards research, education, and agriculture promotion throughout New York State.

The Senate Republicans’ Young Farmers NY Initiative is included in this year’s budget. This program is intended to encourage young farmers to take over from the previous generation of farmers by easing some of the hurdles family farms in New York State are facing. This year’s budget helps to ensure a more promising future for many of our state’s family farms by fostering a smooth transfer of farmland to the next generation of farmers, preserving existing farmland, and helping young farmers overcome obstacles to give them a greater opportunity for a successful career in agriculture.

In addition, the agriculture and farming highlights include:

**Estate Tax:** The budget increases the Estate Tax threshold from $1 million to $5.25 million over a period of three years. This reform of the Estate Tax will encourage farm preservation from generation to generation. This will impact approximately 2,800 family farms throughout the state.

**Marketing New York Products**: This budget works to expand marketing of New York’s products such as apples, berries, dairy, and maple by providing over $2 million for product promotion.

**Beginning Farmer Innovation Grant Fund:**  This new program provides $615,000 for grants for beginning farmers. This money will encourage farming to continue in New York State, as well as help promote new farms to start up, and will be distributed on a competitive basis for the purpose of assisting innovative techniques and operations.

**Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Program:**  This new program includes $100,000 to help recent graduates ease the loan burden faced by new, young farmers.

**Future Farmers of America:** This year’s budget includes increased funding for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) by $158,000 for a total of $350,000.

**Farming and Agriculture Research**: This budget provides over $6 million to Cornell Education, Research and Extension.

**Farm Safety**: The budget provides over $1 million for farm safety and health such as tractor rollover protection grants.

**TAX RELIEF AND MANDATE RELIEF**

In addition to the tax relief measures included in the 2014-15 state budget, the Senate passed the following legislation:

**Exempting Hospitals from the MTA Payroll Tax**

The Senate passed legislation that adds hospitals to the list of institutions that are exempt from the MTA payroll tax. The MTA payroll tax was enacted by Senate Democrats in 2009. In 2011, Senate Republicans successfully fought to eliminate the onerous tax for most of the businesses that paid it. [S2467](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2467-2013), Senator Andrew Lanza (R-C-I, Staten Island)

**Expanding the MTA Payroll Tax Exemption on Self-Employed**

Under the current law, self-employed individuals who earn over $50,000 a year are still paying the MTA payroll tax. This legislation would repeal the tax for self-employed individuals who earn less than $250,000 annually.

In addition, the bill would reduce from .34 percent to .11 percent, the payroll tax rate paid by self-employed individuals earning $250,000 to $300,000, and reduce to .23 percent, the rate paid by self-employed individuals earning from $300,000 to $350,000. [S2648](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2648-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)

**Expanding the Historic Preservation Tax Credit**

The Senate also passed legislation that would encourage more revitalization projects by increasing the maximum award available under the historic preservation tax credit from $5 million to $12 million dollars for developers willing to rehabilitate historic buildings.

Current law caps the tax credit at $5 million on a project which can act as a disincentive for the development of larger, more blighted or more expensive projects. This legislation continues the 20-percent tax credit but raises the maximum threshold to $12 million. [S4642A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4642A-2013), sponsored by Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

**Full Property Tax Exemption for Totally Disabled Veterans**

The Senate passed a bill to make the primary residence of a permanently, totally disabled veteran exempt from property taxes. The exemption helps address concerns that totally disabled veterans who are unable to pay skyrocketing property taxes may be forced out of their homes. [S6563A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6563A-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)

**Reducing Energy Taxes on Businesses**

The Senate passed a measure that would make businesses in New York State fully exempt from the Petroleum Business Tax (PBT) on heating fuel. Currently, residential consumers are fully exempt from the PBT on heating fuel, while businesses receive a partial exemption. The bill would completely eliminate the PBT on heating fuel for commercial use. [S3471](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3471-2013), Senator Tom O’Mara (R-C, Big Flats)

**Tax Credit To Encourage Forest & Habitat Conservation**

This bill passed by the Senate would create a forestry stewardship and habitat conservation tax credit for personal income and business franchise taxes. The tax credit would provide an incentive for private forest landowners to keep their land from development and preserve the benefits provided by contiguous forests to wildlife, water quality, and the forest-based economy. [S1005A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1005A-2013), Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Tax Deduction for Teachers Who Purchase School Supplies**

The Senate passed a bill that would create a state personal income tax deduction of up to $500 per year for out-of-pocket school supply expenses incurred by public and non-public school teachers of grades K-12. Many teachers spend hundreds of dollars a year on supplies for their classes and while there is a federal tax deduction, no state deduction currently exists. [S3626D](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3626D-2013), Senator Andrew Lanza (R-I-C, Staten Island)

**MANDATE RELIEF**

**County Medicaid Takeover**

In 2015, the state will complete a 100 percent takeover of county Medicaid costs. This takeover represents significant mandate relief and will help keep local property taxes under control by providing counties with a savings of $187.1 million in 2015, and a total of $1.2 billion in local Medicaid savings by 2017.

**Mandate Relief for Schools**

The New York State Senate gave final passage to a measure that will provide mandate relief to local school districts by eliminating the requirement of an annual visual inspection of school buildings. The bill would reduce the additional burden forced on school districts, eliminating costs, saving taxpayers money. [S3968A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3968A-2013), PBH, Senator Patty Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton)

**Taxpayers Refunds**

The Senate passed legislation to help speed up the delivery of tax refunds owed to taxpayers by the state. The bill requires the state to pay tax refunds within 30 days of the receipt of a taxpayer’s return, unless there is a discrepancy in the return. [S3047](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3047-2013), Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**Mandate Relief for Counties**

The Senate passed a measure that would provide mandate relief for county government by limiting the temporary detention of defendants in violation of their release in a local correctional facility to three days before their transfer to state custody. This legislation would restore the responsibility for housing and caring for state parole violators back to the state, which will help alleviate the burden upon county taxpayers. [S2612](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2612-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Incentivizing the Investigation and Prosecution of Medicaid Fraud**

The Senate passed a bill that would provide financial incentives to counties and the City of New York to identify and prosecute Medicaid fraud, which would help eliminate waste and abuse. For any successful Medicaid fraud prosecution or settlement, the local government would be able to keep 100 percent of the local share, or 10 percent of the total recovery -- whichever is greater.

Current law unfairly limits the amounts that local governments may receive from successful Medicaid fraud prosecutions. And, as a result, the full original overpayment is not returned to them. [S2617A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2617A-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Wage Theft Prevention Act**

The Wage Theft Prevention Act was enacted in 2010 to provide the Department of Labor with the tools necessary to ensure that workers across the State of New York are paid the wages to which they are entitled. However, the annual notification provision of the Act proved to be a very cumbersome, costly and wasteful mandate on businesses. The Senate approved a bill that repeals this mandate and replaces it with stronger employee protections. [S5885](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5885B-2013), PBH, Senator Diane Savino (D, Staten Island/Brooklyn).

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION**

*2014-15 State Budget*

The budget includes job-creating tax cut proposals that will help small businesses and manufacturers succeed, grow and help create new job opportunities for every New Yorker, including:

>Eliminating the corporate tax on manufacturers this year;

> Creating real property tax credit of 20 percent for manufacturers that lease or own property;

> Accelerating the elimination of the 18-a energy tax surcharge to save all business and residential ratepayers $600 million over the next three years; and

> Increasing the estate tax exemption over the next three years from $1 million $5.25 million. Starting in 2019, the threshold would be equalized with the federal threshold and indexed to inflation. This important change will help maintain family-owned businesses and encourage farm preservation from generation to generation.

The Senate passed legislation including:

**Boost State Funding For Small Businesses**

The Senate passed legislation to direct more state economic development funding to small businesses so they can become more economically competitive, grow, and create more jobs. The bill would require state agencies that award economic development assistance to give preference to small businesses and entrepreneurs because they are most in need of assistance and are significant job creators. [S1530](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1530-2013), Senator John Flanagan (R-C-I, East Northport)

**Mixed Martial Arts**

The Senate also passed legislation to legalize and regulate mixed martial arts (MMA) competitions in New York State. The bill would allow single discipline martial arts organizations to hold professional competitions in New York State and gives the state Athletic Commission the jurisdiction to regulate professional mixed martial arts promotions, participants, bouts and exhibitions. [S6502](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6502-2013), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome)

The Senate passed a bill that provides important oversight and regulation of amateur combative sports events to ensure the safety of the athletes. Currently, professional combative sports matches and exhibitions are prohibited in New York, however, amateur events are

allowed without needed oversight or regulation. [S4877](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4877-2013), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome)

**Cutting Red Tape That Hurts Job Creation**

The Senate approved a regulatory reform package of bills that would help spur job growth by cutting the red tape that hurts small businesses and strangles economic growth. The three bills address one of the more frequently cited roadblocks to job creation – overly burdensome, costly, and unnecessary state rules and regulations.

The bills passed would create a more competitive environment for businesses so they can create new jobs and grow for the future. The measures include:

* Establishing a task force to conduct a comprehensive review of the State Administrative Procedure Act (SAPA). The task force would examine and make recommendations concerning the state’s rulemaking process and whether SAPA ensures the establishment of consistent, uniform rules or whether the process results in rules and regulations that are overly and unnecessarily burdensome and costly. [S5657B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5657B-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma), Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C, Halfmoon), and Senator David Carlucci (D, Rockland/ Westchester), [S6869](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6869-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)
* Reform SAPA to allow regulated businesses to petition a state agency for approval to use an alternative method to comply with a rule instead of the standards prescribed in the rule. Under current law, only groups of local governments can petition a state agency to use an alternative method to implement a rule. [S1784](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1784-2013), Senator David Carlucci (D, Rockland/ Westchester)
* Strengthens SAPA to require consideration of potential adverse impacts on existing and future jobs and employment opportunities in the rulemaking process for state agencies. [S2158](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2158-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

**“Main Street” Revitalization**

The Senate passed a bill that would amend the definition of “HOME” in the Affordable Home Ownership Development Program. This legislation would allow the New York State Housing Trust Fund to include funding opportunities for one- to four-family homes that include a commercial retailing component for up to 25 percent of the share of the loan. This bill would make it easier to revitalize “main street” downtown areas by helping to bring improved housing and shopping opportunities. [S2048](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2048-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Expanding Broadband Access**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to enable the proceeds of federal loans for the expansion of broadband services by the Public Service Commission to be used to expand rural areas. This legislation will ensure that Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers are able to access available federal funds to provide last-mile broadband internet access. Proper high-speed broadband internet would allow users to obtain healthcare access, economic development, education, technological advancement and job growth in rural New York. [S5863A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5863A-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Brownfield Cleanup Program Extension**

The Senate gave final passage to a bill that extends a program to clean up potentially contaminated sites and put them back to productive use. The bill extends the state’s Brownfield Cleanup Program to 2017 and continues the economic development incentives provided to developers when they complete investigations and clean up environmental contamination and increase economic investment in communities throughout the state.

In addition, the bill increases bonding by $300 million for DEC’s Superfund Program, which is charged with identifying, investigating, and cleaning up the state’s most contaminated sites. [S7878](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7878-2013), PBH, Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

**AGING**

*2014-15 State Budget*

**Enhanced STAR Property Tax Relief**

The 2014-15 State Budget includes a record amount of $3.4 billion in property tax relief from the STAR program. That includes $905 million in relief through the Enhanced STAR program for senior citizen homeowners.

**EPIC Expansion**

The budget will expand the number of senior citizens eligible for the EPIC prescription drug program by increasing the income eligibility limits from $35,000 to $75,000 for individuals and from $50,000 to $100,000 for married enrollees.

**Community Services**

The budget also includes a $5 million increase in funding for community services for the elderly, such as transportation assistance, respite care, and home delivery meals, as well as aid for Elder Health / Alzheimer’s Programs; Lifespan for Elderly Abuse, Education and Outreach; New York Foundation for Seniors Home Sharing and Respite; and Senior Action Council Hotline.

Other Bills passed:

**Simplified Enhanced STAR Tax Application**

The Senate passed legislation that would create a shorter, simplified renewal application for senior citizens who already receive an Enhanced STAR tax exemption. This new application will relieve both seniors and tax assessors of needless paperwork and wasted time, especially in cases where the eligibility information is the same. [S2937](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2937-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**Fighting Financial Exploitation of Seniors**

The Senate has passed a package of eight bills to prevent criminals from using financial schemes to prey upon senior citizens. The measures were recommended in a report released by the Senate Majority Coalition in May that examined this growing issue that affects thousands of senior New Yorkers each year. They would:

 Authorize banks to refuse a transaction if the banking institution, social services official, or law enforcement agency reasonably believes that financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult has occurred or may occur. [S6221](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6221-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

 Seek to establish that an alleged abuser may not use the defense of obtained consent to take, withhold, or obtain property, where such consent was obtained from a person who the accused knew or had reason to know was mentally disabled. This measure would help a mentally-infirm elderly victim by establishing in law that they cannot give meaningful consent, such as when an abuser on trial claims the assets taken from the victim were a gift. [S7177](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7177-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

 Allow prosecutors to obtain medical records of mentally impaired victims of financial exploitation, without requiring a waiver from those very victims. Although victims in other types of cases routinely waive their privilege so that prosecutors can obtain crucial medical record, mentally impaired victims cannot consent to waiving their medical privilege any more than they can consent to having their property taken. [S7179](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7179-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

 Require the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to define, identify and collect data related to the incidence of elder abuse possessed by state and local agencies. It also mandates OCFS to establish an inter-agency reporting system that contains a uniform set of standards to collect and analyze information on the incidence of elder abuse. [S2323A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2323A-2013), Senator Jeff Klein (D, Bronx)

 Amend the penal law to explicitly state that in a prosecution for larceny by false promise, partial performance does not, by itself, prevent a reasonable jury from making such finding from all the facts and circumstances. As an illustration, this would apply to a case where a dishonest contractor demands full, up-front payment for services, starts the project, but never completes the promised work. [S7187](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7187-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

 Expand the definition of “caregiver” under the penal law to include a person who voluntarily, or otherwise by operation of law, (such as an appointed guardian or power of attorney) assumes responsibility of an elderly person so that they would be tried under the “endangering the welfare of a vulnerable elderly person” law. [S2951](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2951-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

* Allow the prosecution and defense attorneys to preserve the testimony of witnesses who are age 75 or older. This would help prevent elder abuse offenders from trying to "game the system" by delaying a trial in the hope that an older witness will succumb to conditions associated with advanced age or pass away before trial. [S7178](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7178-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

The Senate also gave final legislative passage to a bill that would allow a caregiver to accompany a vulnerable elderly person who is testifying in front of a grand jury. The caregiver may only fulfill their function with the consent of the prosecutor. [S7188](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7188-2013), PBH, Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

**AGRICULTURE**

*2014-15 State Budget*

The enacted state budget includes $8 million in new funding, the highest level in six years. Funding will go to farming programs and initiatives, as well as towards research, education, and agriculture promotion throughout New York State. The budget also repeals the franchise tax on agriculture cooperatives, removing this nuisance tax further cutting red tape.

The Senate Republicans’ Young Farmers NY Initiative is included in this year’s budget. This program is intended to encourage young farmers to take over from the previous generation of farmers by easing some of the hurdles family farms in New York State are facing. This year’s budget helps to ensure a more promising future for many of our state’s family farms by fostering a smooth transfer of farmland to the next generation of farmers, preserving existing farmland, and helping young farmers overcome obstacles to give them a greater opportunity for a successful career in agriculture.

In addition, the agriculture and farming highlights include:

**Estate Tax:** The budget increases the Estate Tax threshold from $1 million to over $5.25 million over a period of three years. This reform of the Estate Tax will encourage farm preservation from generation to generation. This will impact approximately 2,800 family farms throughout the state.

**Marketing New York Products** -- This budget works to expand marketing of New York’s products such as apples, berries, dairy, and maple by providing $1.3 million for product promotion.

**Beginning Farmer Innovation Grant Fund --** This new program provides $615,000 for grants for beginning farmers. This money will encourage farming to continue in New York State, as well as help promote new farms to start up, and will be distributed on a competitive basis for the purpose of assisting innovative techniques and operations.

**Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Program --** This new program includes $100,000 to help recent graduates ease the loan burden faced by new, young farmers.

**Future Farmers of America --** This year’s budget includes increased funding for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) by $158,000 for a total of $350,000.

**Farming and Agriculture Research** -- This budget provides over $6 million to Cornell Education, Research and Extension.

**Farm Safety** -- The budget provides $1.6 million for farm safety such as tractor rollover protection grants

The bills passed by the Senate include:

**Help for Beginning Farmers**

The Senate passed a bill that was part of a Senate Republican initiative to encourage more young people to pursue farming. The average age of farm operators in New York is 59, and is expected to continue to increase unless steps are taken to reverse this trend. By enacting a revolving loan fund program for beginning farmers, New York can take one small step at helping that recruitment effort and help new farmers with start up costs such as land and equipment. [S6880A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6880A-2013), PBH, Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton)

**“Buy From the Backyard Act”**

The Senate passed the “Buy From the Backyard Act” to promote the purchase of locally grown and produced food. The bill would require that state agencies allocate 20 percent of their total contracts for food from within New York State. [S978](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S978-2013), Senator Thomas Libous (R-C-I, Binghamton)

**Helping Farmers Market Products Directly to Consumers**

The Senate passed legislation that enhances farmers’ ability to market their farms, foods, or other products directly to consumers through the development of roadside stands and on-farm markets. Direct-to-market strategies are becoming increasingly vital to the business plans of New York farmers as prices for the products they produce continue to decline. Direct sales to consumers from a retail farm operation, such as a roadside stand or on-farm market, allows farmers to take advantage of current market demands for fresh, locally grown farm products while also giving consumers access to a variety of quality, nutritious foods. [S4332](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4332-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Assessing Precision Agriculture**

The Senate passed legislation that would direct the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets to conduct a review on the use and development of precision agriculture, as well as the use of broadband by farmers. Precision agriculture is a method of managing farmland by measuring a wide range of variables including soil conditions, crop yields, topography and more. When this data is associated with precise locations within a field, farmers are able to make site-specific adjustments of production inputs such as seed, soil nutrients and fertilizer to improve the management of their farmland and improve crop yields. Improved site selection via global positioning services also enables farmers to produce higher value or specialty products. [S6543B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6543B-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

*2014-15 Budget*

Funding for child care subsidies for low income families is increased by $55 million over last year.

*The Senate passed the following legislation to benefit children and families:*

**“Protect Our Children Act”**

The New York State Senate passed the “Protect Our Children Act,” which would create the new crime of aggravated murder of a child with a sentence of life in prison without parole. The bill would expand an existing law of aggravated abuse of a child which makes it a crime when someone recklessly causes physical injury to a child under the age of 14. [S1721B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1721B-2013), Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

Other provisions of the bill would:

> Create a new felony for concealing the death of a child;

> Create a new felony for failing to notify law enforcement when the whereabouts of a young child is unknown for more than 24 hours;

> Create new felony offenses for obstructing the location of a missing child;

> Create a felony child endangering statute to protect children from especially cruel and sadistic conduct;

> Create a statute to protect children from serious reckless abuse; and

> Increase penalties for repeat child abusers.

**Ensuring Medical Care for The State’s Most Vulnerable Children**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to a bill that would ensure that the state’s most vulnerable children receive necessary medical care in the absence of parental consent. The bill fixes a glaring oversight in current laws protecting all children in foster care by enabling social services commissioners to give consent for medical, dental, health and hospital services when parents are unavailable, not living, or unable to provide necessary consent. [S6813](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6813-2013), PBH, Senator Simcha Felder (D, Brooklyn)

**Carjacking Penalties**

The Senate passed legislation that would increase criminal penalties for carjacking when a child under the age of 16 is present in the vehicle. This bill would make it a class B felony, punishable by up to 25 years in prison. [S1905](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1905-2013), Senator Dean Skelos (R-C-I, Rockville Centre)

**Sexual Contact Between Any School Employee and Student**

The Senate passed legislation criminalizing any school employee or volunteer who has sexual contact with a student, even if that student is at the age of consent. The bill is intended to further protect full-time students of elementary and secondary schools from employees who engage in inappropriate relationships. Violations would be a Class E felony and carry a sentence of up to 4 years in prison. [S1358A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1358A-2013), Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Protecting School Children With Severe Allergies**

The Senate passed legislation that authorizes schools to have and administer the life saving medicine, epinephrine, when a student has a severe allergic reaction. According to Food Allergy Education and Research, food allergies affect one in every 13 children in the United States -- estimated to be two children per classroom. Allergic reactions can range from mild skin rashes to severe anaphylaxis -- a full-body and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction that can stop respiration and heartbeat within seconds.

The first line of defense for anaphylaxis is epinephrine, which often comes in the form of an auto-injector or widely used EpiPen. The timely administration of epinephrine to a child suffering from a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction could mean the difference between life and death. [S7262A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7262A-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**Prevent Drug Dealers from Preying on Children**

The Senate passed legislation to increase penalties for drug dealers who sell to children. The bill strengthens the felony charges for the sale of drugs by an adult to a child under the age of 14. The bill creates the new crime of criminal sale of a controlled substance to a child in the first degree. Adults over the age 18 who sell a controlled substance to a minor under the age of 14 would be charged with a class A-II felony. [S988A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S988A-2013), Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

**Prohibit Sex Offenders From Operating Buses**

The Senate passed legislation that would keep communities safer from sexual predators by prohibiting registered sex offenders from working as bus drivers. Under the provisions of the bill, the Department of Motor Vehicles is prohibited from issuing or renewing a commercial driver's license to operate a passenger or school bus to any individual who is required to register as a sex offender. [S1519](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1519-2013), Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**Increased Penalties for Drug Deals in Playgrounds and Parks**

The Senate passed legislation to protect the safety of children and their families by providing enhanced penalties for the sale of controlled substances in playgrounds and park grounds. [S2173A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2173A-2013), Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn)

**New Family Court Judges**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to legislation that would help alleviate a backlog of cases in the state’s family courts by creating 25 new family court judgeships. One new judgeship would be established in each of 16 counties, and nine in New York City.

New family court judges would be elected in 2014 in Albany, Broome, Chautauqua, Franklin, Nassau, Oneida, Oswego, Schenectady, Suffolk, Ulster and Westchester counties, and take office January 1, 2015.

New family court judges would be elected in 2015 and seated in 2016 in Delaware, Dutchess, Erie, Monroe, and Warren counties. [S7883](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7883-2013), PBH, Senator John Bonacic (R-C-I, Mount Hope)

**CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**Banning Powered Alcohol**

The Senate passed legislation that would ban the sale of powdered alcohol, a concentrated alcoholic beverage also known as “Palcohol.” The bill passed by the Senate would ban this product in New York should the FDA decide to allow for the product to be marketed in the United States. [S7217A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7217A-2013), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome)

**Stopping Identity Thieves Who Target Children**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to a bill that protects children from identity thieves who steal information to establish fraudulent financial accounts. The bill helps stop identity thieves from victimizing children by requiring credit agencies to place a credit record freeze on the account of a minor when requested by a parent or guardian. [S6682B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6682B-2013), PBH, Senator Lee Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley)

**Auto Insurance Proof on Your Smartphone**

The New York State Senate passed legislation that would enable drivers to have proof of auto insurance on their smartphones, rather than having to produce a paper insurance card. Thirty-one states already allow drivers to prove insurance coverage with a wireless device. The bill would allow motorists the option to use a cell phone or other mobile electronic devise to provide proof of insurance coverage instead of having to present a printed card. [S5068C](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5068C-2013), Senator Simcha Felder (D, Brooklyn)

**Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

The Senate gave final passage to legislation that will require all restaurant and commercial properties in New York State to install a carbon monoxide detecting device. The New York state uniform fire prevention and building code is amended to require the installation and maintenance of carbon monoxide detecting devices in restaurants and other commercial buildings. [S6657C](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6657C-2013), PBH, Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R-Syosset)

The Senate also gave final passage to legislation that will require the installation of carbon monoxide detecting devices in all restaurants and commercial buildings in New York City. [S7677](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7677-2013), PBH, Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**Fighting Financial Exploitation of Seniors**

The Senate has passed a package of eight bills to prevent criminals from using financial schemes to prey upon senior citizens. The measures were recommended in a report released by the Senate Majority Coalition in May that examined this growing issue that affects thousands of senior New Yorkers each year. They would:

 Authorize banks to refuse a transaction if the banking institution, social services official, or law enforcement agency reasonably believes that financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult has occurred or may occur. [S6221](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6221-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

 Seek to establish that an alleged abuser may not use the defense of obtained consent to take, withhold, or obtain property, where such consent was obtained from a person who the accused knew or had reason to know was mentally disabled. This measure would help a mentally-infirm elderly victim by establishing in law that they cannot give meaningful consent, such as when an abuser on trial claims the assets taken from the victim were a gift. [S7177](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7177-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

 Allow prosecutors to obtain medical records of mentally impaired victims of financial exploitation, without requiring a waiver from those very victims. Although victims in other types of cases routinely waive their privilege so that prosecutors can obtain crucial medical record, mentally impaired victims cannot consent to waiving their medical privilege any more than they can consent to having their property taken. [S7179](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7179-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

 Require the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to define, identify and collect data related to the incidence of elder abuse possessed by state and local agencies. It also mandates OCFS to establish an inter-agency reporting system that contains a uniform set of standards to collect and analyze information on the incidence of elder abuse. [S2323A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2323A-2013), Senator Jeff Klein (D, Bronx)

 Amend the penal law to explicitly state that in a prosecution for larceny by false promise, partial performance does not, by itself, prevent a reasonable jury from making such finding from all the facts and circumstances. As an illustration, this would apply to a case where a dishonest contractor demands full, up-front payment for services, starts the project, but never completes the promised work. [S7187](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7187-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

 Expand the definition of “caregiver” under the penal law to include a person who voluntarily, or otherwise by operation of law, (such as an appointed guardian or power of attorney) assumes responsibility of an elderly person so that they would be tried under the “endangering the welfare of a vulnerable elderly person” law. [S2951](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2951-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

* Allow the prosecution and defense attorneys to preserve the testimony of witnesses who are age 75 or older. This would help prevent elder abuse offenders from trying to "game the system" by delaying a trial in the hope that an older witness will succumb to conditions associated with advanced age or pass away before trial. [S7178](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7178-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

The Senate also gave final legislative passage to a bill that would allow a caregiver to accompany a vulnerable elderly person who is testifying in front of a grand jury. The caregiver may only fulfill their function with the consent of the prosecutor. [S7188](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7188-2013), PBH, Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

**Looking Out for Consumers and Businesses**

The Senate passed legislation to protect consumers who are often enticed by unethical propane fuel dealers to purchase propane fuel, and have their propone tank services based on misleading advertised prices. In these instances, where the propone tank is owned by a different propane dealer than the dealer supplying the fuel, there is often little regard for the safety and welfare of the tank as well as no regard for the safe handling and storage of the potentially hazardous fuel, which endangers both consumers and property. [S2049](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2049B-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**CRIME AND CORRECTIONS**

**Mandatory Treatment Plans for Dangerous Parolees with Mental Illness**

The Senate passed legislation in response to acts of senseless violence committed by recently released inmates with mental illnesses. These attacks have revealed that too many violent mentally ill convicts are released from prison without any mental health treatment plan in place upon their discharge. This tragic lapse in the system has resulted in numerous injuries and murders, as was the case with suspected child-killer Daniel St. Hubert, who is charged with going on a stabbing spree just days after being released from state prison. If there was a sufficient treatment plan in place, it might have prevented him from being a threat to the lives and safety of others.

This bill closes the loopholes that allowed St. Hubert to roam the streets without any medication or treatment from a community mental health care provider. This important legislation would also authorize parole officers to initiate an involuntary mental health commitment proceeding if a newly-released parolee fails to abide by the treatment requirements set or is otherwise recognized to be a threat. In some cases, a parole officer may be the only professional in direct contact with a parolee after their release, but they are currently not authorized to begin involuntary commitment proceedings. [S7818](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7818-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Prevent Drug Dealers from Preying on Children**

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**DWI Bills**

The Senate passed legislation that would help convict dangerous drivers under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The bill would require testing drivers suspected of being under the influence when an accident occurs and results in serious injury or death. [S1446](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1446-2013), Senator John Flanagan (R-C-I, East Northport).

**Vince’s Law**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to “Vince’s Law,” a bill that would extend the period of time in which multiple Driving While Intoxicated convictions can occur in order to be considered a felony. Under the bill, an individual convicted of three or more DWIs within 15 preceding years would be charged with a Class D felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison and up to a $10,000 fine.

The bill is named for Vincent Russo, an 82-year-old Onondaga County man, who was killed in 2011 by a drunk driver while Russo was on his way to Sunday morning mass. The intoxicated driver, Michael Iannettoni, had five prior DWI-related convictions, including four in the previous 17 years before the crash that killed Mr. Russo. [S7108](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7108-2013), PBH, Senator John A. DeFrancisco (R-I-C, Syracuse)

**Requiring Blood Testing After Deadly Accidents**

The Senate passed legislation to help police investigate deadly automobile accidents where alcohol may be a factor. The bill would require law enforcement officers to conduct field tests and test blood alcohol levels of all drivers involved in auto accidents where serious physical injury or death occur. The tests can be used to determine if intoxication was a factor in the crash and identify the driver that was responsible. Refusal by a driver to consent to the tests would be treated as a presumption of guilt and made part of the police report that can be used at trial. [S3769](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3769-2013), Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester).

**Prohibit Sex Offenders From Operating Buses**

The Senate passed legislation that would keep communities safer from sexual predators by prohibiting registered sex offenders from working as bus drivers. Under the provisions of the bill, the Department of Motor Vehicles is prohibited from issuing or renewing a commercial driver's license to operate a passenger or school bus to any individual who is required to register as a sex offender. [S1519](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1519-2013), Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**Harsher Penalties for Methamphetamine Production**

The Senate passed legislation to reduce the number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories, which pose dangerous threats to public health and safety. The bill implements a series of increasingly severe felony offenses to strengthen the criminal penalties for methamphetamine manufacturing and the possession of methamphetamine manufacturing material. The bill includes a provision making it a Class A-1 felony, punishable by a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, when criminals are convicted of operating a meth lab for the second time in five years. [S3639](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3639-2013), Senator Thomas O’Mara (R-C, Big Flats)

**Increase Punishment of Persistent Criminal Offenders**

The Senate passed legislation that would authorize courts to charge criminals with a felony if they are charged with a misdemeanor after three prior misdemeanor convictions. The bill would address the issue of criminal offenders who persistently commit misdemeanor crimes, including sex offenses, yet avoid more severe felony prison sentences, leaving them free to commit additional crimes. [S3074](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3074-2013), Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn)

**Strengthens Penalties for Leaving the Scene of an Accident**

The Senate passed legislation that increases the penalties for leaving the scene of an accident when a death, injury, or damage of property occurs. The bill would deter drivers from leaving injured victims on the road, facilitate police investigations, and enable timely chemical testing of a driver if warranted. [S2503](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2503-2013), Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn)

**Increasing Penalties for Auto Insurance Fraud**

The Senate passed three bills to crack down on criminals and scam artists who commit auto insurance fraud that costs New Yorkers billion of dollars in higher insurance premiums, and has caused serious injuries and death to innocent victims.

> **Alice’s Law,** would make it a crime to stage a motor vehicle accident with intent to commit insurance fraud. This felony crime would be punishable by up to seven years in prison. [S3547](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3547-2013), Senator James Seward (R-C-I, Oneonta)

> Another bill makes it illegal to act as a “runner” who steers accident victims towards crooked doctors who bill Medicaid for unnecessary medical treatments. Runners are key members of auto fraud rings. Under this bill, they could get four years in prison. [S3033](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3033-2013), Senator Dean Skelos (R, Rockville Centre)

>Additional legislation would address cases of auto fraud perpetrated by drivers who deliberately misrepresent where they live, operate a vehicle, or garage their vehicle, in order to obtain lower auto insurance premiums, and shifting higher premiums to honest drivers. [S2373](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2373A-2013), Senator Jeff Klein (D, Bronx)

**Brittany’s Law**

The Senate approved “Brittany’s Law,” a bill that would increase the safety and awareness of communities by creating a public registry of convicted violent felons. The legislation would require all individuals convicted of a violent felony to register with the New York State Division of Criminal Justice upon discharge, parole or release from any state or local facility, hospital or institution. [S1850B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1850B-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

**Criminalizing Revenge Porn**

The Senate passed legislation that would make it a crime to distribute “revenge porn” – the practice of sharing private nude photographs or explicit videos publically without the consent of the individual pictured. The bill criminalizes the dissemination of sexually intimate images or images of intimate parts of another person without that person's explicit consent in order to harm, harass, scare or alarm that individual. [S5946A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5946A-2013), Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County)

**Renee’s Law**

The Senate passed a measure to protect the staff and youth in group homes and other youth residential facilities. “Renee’s Law” increases the criminal history and other information available to those involved in residential placements for violent youth offenders so that a thorough evaluation of the youth's rehabilitation and the risk they pose to the community can be performed.

The measure was named for Renee Greco, a 24-year-old youth care worker who was killed at a group home for troubled youths in Lockport, Niagara County. [S2625B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2625B-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Strengthening Campus Safety Act**

The Senate passed a measure that will assist victims of violent crimes and students who may have gone missing by requiring the timely notification of law enforcement. The bill strengthens the existing College Safety Act by requiring colleges and universities to notify law enforcement within 24 hours of receiving a report of a violent felony or when a student who resides in campus housing is missing. [S2753B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2753B-2013), PBH, Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C, Halfmoon)

**Work Release Program**

The New York State Senate passed legislation that would expand work release programs to allow eligible inmates, deemed not to be dangerous, to help with not-for-profit organizations and public service projects. The bill utilizes this work force productively to help communities while giving inmates job-training opportunities. Providing more options for these programs would increase community enhancement of these facilities at no additional cost to taxpayers. [S2204A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2204A-2013), Senator Cathy Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Aggravated Harassment Law**

The Senate gave final legislation passage to a bill that would clarify a state law related to the crime of Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree, that was declared unconstitutional by the state Court of Appeals last year. The bill would criminalize harassing communications that threaten to cause physical harm to a victim or the victim’s property where a defendant knows or should know that the communication will cause the victim to fear such harm. [S7869](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7869-2013), PBH Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

**Cracking Down on Serial Drunk Drivers**

The Senate passed legislation that would crack down on serial drunk drivers. The bill would include three previous convictions of driving while under the influence as a factor to increase the crime of vehicular manslaughter to aggravated vehicular homicide when a fourth accident causes a death of another. [S4772A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4772A-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

**Holding Drunk Drivers Who Leave Scene of an Accident Accountable**

A bill passed by the Senate would toughen the law related to leaving the scene of an accident without reporting. Current law requires that a prosecutor prove that a drunk driver knowingly caused personal injury or property damage. This bill would change the law so that drivers illegally operating their vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol are presumed to know they caused an accident and are held responsible when leaving the scene of an accident. [S1698A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1698A-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

**Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence**

The Senate passed a bill that would allow these victims of domestic violence to testify in the physical absence of their abusers, which would help to facilitate their willingness to come forward. Domestic violence is the most common cause of intentional homicide of women in New York State, and that is why the Senate has taken action this legislative session by passing this bill, which would authorize the use of closed circuit television for the testimony of victims of domestic violence. As many victims of domestic violence are often intimated by their abusers, this legislation would allow them to testify without intimidation. [S2205](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2205-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Closing Loopholes in Unlawful Surveillance Law**

The Senate passed legislation that seeks to establish a right of action for damages for the unauthorized invasion of privacy by video surveillance of an individual’s recreational activities which occur in their own backyard. [S3079,](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3079A-2013) Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Criminalizes Dissemination of an Obscene Image to an Internet Site without Consent**

The Senate passed a bill that would criminalize the dissemination of an unlawful surveillance image without the consent or knowledge of the person to a computer network internet website. The penalty for such crime would be a class A misdemeanor. [S3378A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3378A-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**EDUCATION**

*2014-15 State Budget*

The enacted budget increased aid to education by $1.1 billion.

**GEA** -- The Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) was an unfair school aid cut imposed by Democrats in 2010 when they controlled all three branches of government. Every Senate Republican voted no on the GEA, which has cost school districts to lose significant state aid.

Due largely to the Senate Republican Conference, the state is reducing the GEA by $602 million in this year’s budget - the single largest reduction in the GEA since it was implemented over our objections.

**Common Core Delay** -- The budget includes a two-year delay on the use of the controversial common core testing for grade promotion decisions for children from third to eighth grades and measures to eliminate unnecessary standardized testing to focus more classroom time on teaching, rather than testing. The budget also includes strict data protection provisions to protect student privacy. The test results would still be used for teacher evaluations.

**Pre-K Funding** -- In addition, the budget includes $1.5 billion over the next five years for statewide funding of Pre-Kindergarten programs. Aid will also be provided to districts Upstate and on Long Island, along with the flexibility to use it either for early education programs or additional GEA restoration.

**Charter Schools** -- The new state budget increases state tuition aid for charter schools over the next three years. Charter schools will receive an increase of $250 per pupil in 2014-15; $350 in 2015-16; and $500 in 2016-17. Charter schools will also be eligible for Pre-K funds. The budget also recognizes that local districts will be held harmless from any additional costs associated with charters in their communities.

**Technology Bond Act –** Voters will decide this fall on a proposed$2 billion bond act to fund technological improvements in schools including broad band expansion and new technology for student use in classrooms.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

The budget increases base aid support for community colleges by $75 for each full-time equivalent student, which represents a total increase of $15.1 million for SUNY and CUNY community colleges.

In addition, the overall state operating support for the state’s public university systems is increased by $148 million for SUNY and $102 million for CUNY. The budget increases total operating investments for the State’s public universities, including $411 million in new capital funding for strategic initiatives.

Funding for The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is increased by $34.2 million, to help thousands of young New Yorkers afford the cost of a higher education.

Each university system will receive $55 million for the next round of SUNY 2020 and CUNY 2020 programs to provide competitive grants for projects that drive economic development and academic excellence.

**Farmers Loan Forgiveness Program:**

The Farmers Loan Forgiveness Program incentivizes courses of study in the agricultural field to residents of the state. This program offers loan forgiveness of $100,000 and was proposed by Senate Republicans earlier this year to encourage young people to pursue careers in agriculture.

**Child Care:**

The budget helpsensure that young parents can pursue higher education by restoring $1.2 million for child care on SUNY and CUNY campuses.

The Senate passed legislation including:

**Increasing Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Award Limits**

The Senate passed legislation that builds upon the $34.2 million TAP increase the legislature included in the 2014-15 state budget. The measure increases the maximum TAP award from $5,165 to $6,470 beginning in fall 2015. In addition, the bill increases the maximum income eligibility for TAP from $80,000 to $100,000 to include more middle class families and students. [S7795](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7795-2013), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson)

**Helping Students Pay Off Student Loan Debt**

The Senate approved legislation that would help students pay off large student debts. The bill would enable eligible students to convert up to $35,000 in private student loan debt into a low-interest loan to be managed by the state. Students would be able to pay off the loan based on their annual income and ability to pay. The new program, called the New York Student Affordable Refinancing for Tomorrow (New START) Program, would make it easier for students to pay off student loan debt, which has surpassed credit card debt as the number one source of debt in the nation. [S7791](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7791-2013), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson)

**Free Community College**

The Senate passed a bill to guarantee access to a free community college education for eligible students. This bill requires the state’s Higher Education Services Corporation to reimburse students for the cost of attending a community college if they meet eligibility requirements related to academic success and financial aid eligibility. [S7793](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7793-2013), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson)

**Accelerated Degrees**

The Senate proposed a bill to create a pilot program that includes reduced-cost accelerated baccalaureate degrees at SUNY institutions. These degree programs would be completed within three years and caps the total tuition cost at $12,000 for the 2016-2017 academic year [S7792](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7792-2013), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson)

**Unemployment Training**   
  
The Senate passed a bill to establish a grant-funded program geared at retraining and employing unemployed people. This legislation awards a $500,000 grant to community colleges to develop or improve existing workforce development programs. It would provide proper training required for job placement in businesses and industries within an eligible college’s region that is lacking the necessary workforce, is seeking employees with new skills, or where job growth is anticipated in the near future. [S7794](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7794-2013), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson)

**Common Core Implementation Reform – Teacher Evaluations**

The Senate gave final passage to legislation to addressing serious concerns raised about teacher evaluations as a result of the State Education Department’s flawed implementation of the Common Core Program. The bill helps protect teachers by addressing the high-stakes consequences facing educators as part of the state’s evaluation requirements. It continues and does not delay the state’s teacher evaluation system, but the measure also maintains fairness by taking into consideration the negative role the initial Common Core rollout may have had on student and teacher performance.

For two school years - 2013-14 and 2014-15 - teachers and principals who are rated “developing” or “ineffective” will be evaluated based on factors that exclude Common Core State tests. A teacher or principal who is still “ineffective” or “developing” based on the non-State factors will face all of the consequences under current law, including an expedited hearing process for termination for teachers who are rated ineffective two years in a row. PBH, [S7921](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7921-2013), Senator John Flanagan (R-C-I, East Northport)

**Licensing of Geologists**

The Senate passed legislation to ensure that Geologists who practice in New York meet appropriate education and experience criteria. The bill requires geologists to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher in geology, have five years of practical experience and have passed a state exam. [S3810D](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3810D-2013), PBH, Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**Developing Statewide Virtual Learning Programs**

The Senate passed a that would require the Commissioner of Education to establish a temporary online learning advisory council that would develop recommendations related to a statewide online and blended learning network. The recommendations would include, but not be limited to, guidance for use of a statewide online and blended learning network, best practices and model school policies, academic programming, partnerships with institutions of higher education, and a review of teaching and professional development policies.[S5509C](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5509C-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Maintaining Public Libraries**

The Senate passed legislation to enable New York’s network of twenty three state-supported public library systems to continue to meet the need for library services despite continued economic challenges and natural disasters impacting local communities, local governments and school districts. The bill gives the Commissioner of Education greater flexibility in granting a waiver from local maintenance of effort funding requirements for libraries. Depending on the local situation, the Commissioner would have the authority to grant a waiver for a period of up to three years. [S2857B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2857B-2013), PBH, Senator Hugh Farley, (R-C, Schenectady)

**ENERGY**

**Study of Recent Electric Price Increases**

After a brutal winter that was accompanied by the largest price increases on gas and electricity in recent memory, the Senate passed legislation that directs the public service commission to conduct a study on gas and electric supply prices during the time period from November of 2013 through the end of April 2014. [S7007A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7007A-2013), PBH, Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)

**Fuel Cell Incentive Program**

Establishes a long-term fuel cell incentive program to be managed by NYSERDA to encourage development of fuel cell generating systems. Fuel cells could play an important role in providing power generation and distribution, particularly following major storms that result in large-scale power outages. [S7460](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7460-2013), Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)

**Tax Exemption Extension on Alternative Energy**

The Senate passed a bill to extend until 2025, the real property tax exemption for certain solar, wind, or farm energy systems. The extension will provide surety to developers of renewable energy that the option for a real property tax exemption will exist well into the future. The option to exempt wind, solar and farm waste energy systems from real property taxes has helped to spur the development of renewable energy across New York State and in turn contributed to reductions in harmful emissions. [S7026](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7026A-2013), PBH, Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)

**Public Interest Following Power Outages**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to ensure that customers who have experienced a major power outage have an opportunity to provide direct input to the Public Service Commission and/or their senior staff about their experience via a public hearing in the affected area. [S6373](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6373-2013), PBH, Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)

**Net Metering Study**

The Senate passed legislation that directs the public service commission to conduct a study to analyze the economic and environmental benefits from and the economic cost burden, if any, of the net energy metering program in New York. Net metering allows consumers who install renewable energy systems to reduce their electric bills by using electricity from the grid. [S5149](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5149A-2013), PBH, Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

*2014-15 State Budget*

The budget includes a $9 million increase to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), bringing the total to $162 million, while also making significant investments in improvements to state park facilities and environmental infrastructure.

The increase in the EPF will boost funding for important capital projects that protect the environment and enhance communities. The EPF helps protect open spaces; restore historic sites; conserve farmland; restore habitat; control invasive species; improve water quality; and create and enhance parks, among other projects.

The budget also includes two important investments from the NY Works program, which provides billions of dollars to rebuild the state's roads, bridges, parks, and other infrastructure and helps create jobs. State park facilities and historic sites will receive $92.5 million to make much-needed repairs and improvements. An additional $40 million will support projects to repair the deteriorating conditions of aging environmental infrastructure, such as flood control, wastewater systems and recreational facilities.

The Senate approved, as part of the 2014-15 state budget, a law to make the crossbow a legal hunting implement in New York State, and empower the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to promulgate rules and regulations to establish a crossbow hunting season and govern their use in New York. Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)

Other provisions in the 2014-15 budget will help to support tourism and recreation in the state, including:

>$6 million for 50 new projects to provide recreational access to approximately 380,000 acres of existing state lands;

>$4 million for upgrades and improvements to fish hatcheries;

>Reduces short-term fishing license fees and creates 10 days of promotional prices for sporting licenses;

>Authorizes crossbow hunting for small game and for big game throughout firearms seasons and during portions of archery season for hunters 14 years of age or older, in all counties north of Westchester;

>Increases the number of state-authorized free fishing days offered each year from two to eight; and

>Creates free or discounted adventure license holders for new and existing lifetime sporting and park license holders.

Environmental conservation bills passed by the Senate this year include:

**Preventing Environmental Crimes**

The Senate passed legislation that would hold criminals accountable for the financial and environmental damage caused by their actions when they contaminate or destroy the quality of water, soil, or air. [S1016](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1016-2013), Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester)

**Animal Protection Bills**

In May, the Senate held the 4th annual Animal Advocacy Day at the Capitol by passing bills to protect animals from harm and cruelty. Animal Advocacy Day brings together lawmakers, law enforcement and hundreds of pet owners and advocates to raise awareness of the need to protect pets and people from violence.

The Senate passed bills to protect animals including:

* Prohibiting people convicted under the historic animal cruelty measure --“Buster’s Law” -- from ever owning a companion animal again, and require them to undergo a psychiatric evaluation. [S2566](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2566-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)
* Expanding the crime of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony. [S2560A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2560A-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)
* Substantially increasing the penalties for stealing companion animals, such as pet dogs and cats. The measure would increase the penalty from $200 to $1,000, with a possible prison term of six months, for the act of stealing a companion animal. [S7684A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7684A-2013), PBH, Senator Mark Grisanti (R-Buffalo)

**Brownfield Cleanup Program Extension**

The Senate gave final passage to a bill that extends a program to clean up potentially contaminated sites and put them back to productive use. The bill extends the state’s Brownfield Cleanup Program to 2017 and continues the economic development incentives provided to developers when they complete investigations and clean up environmental contamination and increase economic investment in communities throughout the state.

In addition, the bill increases bonding by $300 million for DEC’s Superfund Program, which is charged with identifying, investigating, and cleaning up the state’s most contaminated sites. [S7878](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7878-2013), PBH, Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

**Universal Signage to Warn Aquatic Invasive Species Threat**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to legislation that directs the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to design and post at public boat launches, a universal sign warning of the threat of aquatic invasive species. Aquatic invasive species (AIS), such as zebra mussels, asian clams and hydrilla, pose a serious threat to the ecosystems and economies of the communities around lakes, rivers and other bodies of waters. [S7643A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7643A-2013), PBH, Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Protecting our Nighttime Skies**

The Senate passed legislation that would protect our nighttime skies from glare and excess lighting allowing residents to enjoy the stars. The bill would prohibit exterior lighting on State buildings from shining upwards. [S5275B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5275B-2013), PBH, Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**GOVERNMENT REFORM**

*2014-15 State Budget*

The budget includes sweeping ethics reform measures to ensure the public’s trust in government, including the following:

> Creating the new crime of Corrupting the Government and increasing penalties for bribery, and public corruptions crimes;

> Stricter penalties for theft of state or local government property;

> Permanently barring individuals or businesses convicted of public corruption from holding any elected or civil office, serving as a lobbyist or doing business with the state;

> Establishing a public campaign financing pilot program, not funded by taxpayer dollars, to be used for the 2014 race for state Comptroller;

> Creating an independent enforcement unit at the state Board of Elections; and

> Bringing enhanced disclosure and reporting by the independent expenditure organizations that have expanded in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court case Citizens United v. F.E.C..

Bills passed by the Senate include:

**“Sunshine Week”**

The Senate passed legislation to make state legislative proceedings more open and transparent by expanding public access to session, committee meetings, and votes. The bill requires the webcasting and archiving of Senate and Assembly committees and hearings and the online posting of votes taken in committees or on the floor. [S3046C](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3046C-2013), Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**Board of Regents Selection Process**

The Senate passed legislation to dramatically reform the selection process for the state Board of Regents to better reflect the population of the entire state. The bill establishes a more equitable and balanced appointment process for the selection of the Board of Regents, who are charged with setting education policy in New York. [S2031A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2031A-2013), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson)

**Health and Mental Hygiene**

**Addressing Statewide Heroin and Opioid Crisis**

The Senate passed a comprehensive package of bills to address the growing heroin and opioid crisis. The measures target prevention, treatment, and enforcement issues raised during extensive testimony provided by dozens of experts, parents, and concerned New Yorkers at the 18 forums held by the Senate Majority Coalition’s Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction.

In March 2014, New York State Senate Majority Coalition Co-Leaders Skelos and Klein created the Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, chaired by Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County), to examine the alarming rise in use of heroin and opioids that has claimed lives and hurt families across New York State. Over nine weeks, task force members held 18 forums throughout New York where they spoke with more than 200 panelists, and listened to over 50 hours of testimony to prepare an extensive [report](http://www.nysenate.gov/files/Joint_Senate_Heroin_Addiction_Task_Force_Final_Report_5-27-14.pdf) on heroin and opioid addiction in the state.

Task force forum participants examined the issues surrounding the increase in drug abuse, addiction and drug related crimes; solicited input from experts and other stakeholders; and developed recommendations that were used to create a comprehensive package of legislation to address these issues.

The task force recommendations are very similar to, or complement all of the bills passed, which include:

**Preventing Opioid Abuse and Overdoses**

**- Increasing public awareness**: Requires the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the Department of Health (DOH) to establish the Heroin and Opioid Pain Addiction Awareness and Education Program. The Program would utilize social and mass media to reduce the stigma associated with drug addiction, while increasing public’s knowledge about the dangers of opioid and heroin abuse, the signs of addiction, and relevant programs and resources. [S7911](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7911-2013), PBH, Senator Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County)

**- Establishing school drug prevention programs:** Allows for age-appropriate information about the dangers of illegal drug use to be added to junior high school and high school health class curriculums. [S7910](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7910-2013), PBH, Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

**- Increasing the effectiveness of overdoses prevention**: Provides that naloxone kits distributed through an opioid overdose prevention program must include an informational card with instructions on steps to take following administration, as well as information on how to access addiction treatment and support services. Opioid overdose prevention programs provide those at risk of an overdose, their family members and their friends with naloxone kits and training on proper administration. [S7905](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7905-2013), PBH, Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C, Halfmoon)

**Increasing the Availability and Efficacy of Addiction Treatment**

**- Creating a new model of detoxification and transitional services:** Establishes the Opioid Treatment and Hospital Diversion Demonstration Program, requiring the development of a new model of detoxification and transitional services for individuals who are in of need support but may not need serious medical care, therefore reducing reliance on emergency room services. [S7904](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7904-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**- Establishing a relapse prevention demonstration program:** Creates a Wraparound Services Demonstration Program, through which OASAS would provide referral services for individuals both during participation in substance abuse treatment programs and for nine months thereafter. These community supports, access to which is intended to prevent a relapse, include case management services addressing educational resources, legal services, financial services, and childcare services; peer-to-peer support groups, social services; family services; employment support; and transportation assistance. [S7903](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7903-2013), PBH, Senator David Carlucci(D,Rockland/ Westchester)

**- Enabling parents to seek services for children suffering from substance abuse:** Provides that a minor child alleged to be suffering from a substance use disorder may receive an assessment for such disorder as part of the Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) diversion services and may access a variety of services through the PINS diversion process. [S7909](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7909-2013), PBH, Senator Simcha Felder (D, Brooklyn) and Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

**- Promoting the affordability of substance abuse services:** Requires insurers to comply with federal substance abuse parity laws, strengthens and standardizes the utilization review process for determining insurance coverage for substance abuse treatment disorders, and requires insurers to continue to provide and reimburse for treatment throughout the appeals process. [S7912](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7912-2013), PBH, Senator James Seward (R-C-I, Oneonta), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau), Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola) and Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C-, Heuvelton)

**Providing Additional Resources to Law Enforcement**

**- Assisting Health Department Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement Investigators:** Authorizes the Department’s Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE) investigators to directly access criminal histories of individuals suspected of criminally diverting prescription medications. [S7906](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7906-2013), PBH, Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

**- Adding Fraud and Deceit of Prescription Medication to Penal Law:** Creates a new crime in the penal code of “fraud and deceit related to controlled substances” to crack down on doctor shopping, criminalizing behavior by those individuals who obtain or attempt to obtain a controlled substance or a prescription by misrepresenting themselves as a doctor or pharmacist, or presenting a forged prescription. [S7907](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7907-2013), PBH, Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset)

**- Creating the criminal offense of “criminal sale of a controlled substance by a practitioner or pharmacist”:** Creates a new crime in the Penal law - a Class C felony - when a practitioner or pharmacist uses his or her professional practice to unlawfully sell controlled substances. [S7902](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7902-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**- Making the "criminal sale of a controlled substance by a practitioner or pharmacist" offense eligible for prosecution under the enterprise corruption statute** and allows for eavesdropping warrants, both tools for investigations into the illegal distribution of controlled substances. [S7908](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7908-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**Senate Majority Coalition Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction**

The New York State Senate Majority Coalition Co-Leaders Dean Skelos and Jeffrey Klein created the Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction to examine the alarming rise in use of heroin and opioids that has claimed lives and hurt families across New York State.

Over the past nine weeks, task force members held 18 forums throughout New York including in Cayuga, Chautauqua, Chemung, Clinton, Genesee, Jefferson, Monroe, Nassau, New York, Oneida, Orange, Otsego, Putnam, Rensselaer, Richmond, Rockland, Suffolk and Sullivan counties. Task force members traveled over 8,000 miles, spoke with more than 200 panelists, and listened to over 50 hours of testimony. Forum participants examined the issues surrounding the increase in drug abuse, addiction and drug related crimes, solicited input from experts and other stakeholders, and developed recommendations that were used to create a comprehensive package of legislation to address these issues.

Parents told harrowing stories about loved ones addicted to opioids and the difficulty in receiving critical treatment. Law enforcement officials testified that they needed stronger tools to prevent criminals from putting more deadly drugs on the streets. Treatment and medical professionals urged lawmakers to treat opioid addiction as a disease, and to make treatment more readily and widely available. Prevention groups and educators focused on eliminating the stigma associated with addiction and supported the creation of more programs to inform the public about the dangers of substance abuse. Recovering addicts advocated for more treatment options, more beds, and more recovery time.

Testimony at the forums directed the task force’s legislative response to three key areas: preventing drug abuse and overdoses; increasing the availability and efficacy of addiction treatment; and enhancing the tools provided to law enforcement to keep heroin off the streets. As a result, the Senate passed 25 bills recommended by the task force to address issues surrounding the increase in heroin and opioid abuse, addiction, and related crimes in New York.

The bills passed by the senate include:

**Preventing Opioid Abuse and Overdoses**

 **Preventing opioid overdoses in schools:** Clarifies that school districts, Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) programs, charter schools, and other educational entities may possess and administer naloxone to treat opioid overdoses, and will be protected by Good Samaritan laws. [S7661](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7661-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

 **Increasing the effectiveness of overdose prevention:** Provides that naloxone kits distributed through an opioid overdose prevention program must include an informational card with instructions on steps to take following administration, as well as information on how to access addiction treatment and support services. Opioid overdose prevention programs provide those at risk of an overdose, their family members and their friends with naloxone kits and training on proper administration. [S7649A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7649A-2013), Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C Halfmoon)

 **Limiting prescriptions for acute pain:** Limits the number of Schedule II and III controlled substances prescribed for acute pain to a 10-day supply to prevent excess pharmaceuticals from being dispensed, and therefore reduce the risk of diversion. This restriction would not apply to the treatment of cancer pain, chronic pain or palliative care. Further, the bill provides that only one co-payment may be charged for a 30-day supply. [S2949A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2949A-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

 **Increasing public awareness:** Requires the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the Department of Health (DOH) to establish the Heroin and Prescription Opioid Pain Medication Addiction Awareness and Education Program. The program would utilize social and mass media to reduce the stigma associated with drug addiction, while increasing public’s knowledge about the dangers of opioid and heroin abuse, the signs of addiction, and relevant programs and resources. [S7654](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7654-2013), Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County)

 **Establishing school drug prevention programs:** Adds age-appropriate information about the dangers of illegal drug use to junior high school and high school health class curriculums. [S7653](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7653-2013), Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

 **Promoting pharmaceutical take-back events:** Requires OASAS to post guidelines and requirements for conducting a pharmaceutical collection event on its website. According to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/04/25/friends-and-family-are-primary-sources-abused-prescription-drugs) (SAMHSA), nearly 70 percent of those who first abuse prescription drugs get the pills from a friend or relative. Facilitating proper and timely disposal of unused narcotics helps to reduce the danger of diversion. [S6691](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6691-2013), PBH, Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County)

 **Ensuring prescribing practitioners stay abreast of best practices:** Creates a continuing medical education program for practitioners with prescribing privileges. DOH and the State Education Department (SED) would establish standards for three hours of biennial instruction on topics including Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing (I-STOP) requirements, pain management, appropriate prescribing, acute pain management, palliative medicine, addiction screening and treatment, and end-of-life care. [S7660](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7660-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau) and Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)

**Increasing the Availability and Efficacy of Addiction Treatment**

 **Creating a new model of detoxification and transitional services:** Establishes the Opioid Treatment and Hospital Diversion Demonstration Program, requiring the development of a new model of detoxification and transitional services for individuals seeking to recover from opioid addiction that reduces reliance on emergency room services. [S2948](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2948-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

 **Establishing a relapse prevention demonstration program:** Creates a Wraparound Services Demonstration Program through which OASAS would provide case management or referral services for nine months to individuals who successfully complete substance abuse treatment programs. These community supports - access to which is intended to prevent a relapse - include educational resources, peer-to-peer support groups, social services and family services and counseling, employment support and counseling transportation assistance, medical services, legal services, financial services, and child care services. [S7650](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7650-2013), Senator David Carlucci (D, Rockland/ Westchester)

 **Enabling parents to require children to undergo treatment:** Provides that a parent or guardian may petition to have a minor child designated as a Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) due to a substance use disorder, and that a court may require a PINS child to undergo substance abuse treatment. [S7652A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7652A-2013), Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

 **Establishing assisted outpatient treatment for substance use disorders:** Enables a court to order Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) for an individual with a substance use disorder who, due to his or her addiction, poses a threat to him or herself or others. [S7651A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7651A-2013), Senator David Carlucci (D, Rockland/ Westchester)

 **Promoting the affordability of substance abuse services:** Improves the utilization review process for determining insurance coverage for substance abuse treatment disorders, and requires insurers to continue to provide coverage throughout the appeals process. [S7662A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7662A-2013), Senator James Seward (R-C-I, Oneonta), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau), Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola) and Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton)

**Providing Additional Resources to Law Enforcement**

 **Studying the conversion of correctional facilities to treatment centers:** Directs OASAS and the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to study the feasibility of converting closed correctional facilities to provide treatment for substance use disorders. Agencies would examine the feasibility of such centers providing both inpatient residential and outpatient care. [S7655A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7655A-2013), Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County) and Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

 **Establishing the crime of homicide by sale of an opioid controlled substance:** Creates an A-I felony for the unlawful transportation or sale of an opioid that causes the death of another. [S7657](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7657-2013), Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester)

 **Restricting drug dealers from participating in the SHOCK incarceration program:** Holds drug dealers accountable by preventing participation in the SHOCK incarceration program – under which young adults receive substance abuse treatment, academic education, and other services to promote reintegration – by individuals convicted of a A-II felony drug offense, except if he or she tests positive for a controlled substance upon arraignment. [S7656](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7656-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

 **Creating Drug-Free Zones around treatment facilities:** Establishes a B felony for the sale of a controlled substance within 1,000 feet of a drug or alcohol treatment center or methadone clinic. [S1388](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1388-2013), Senator Dean Skelos (R, Rockville Centre)

 **Improving safety at judicial diversion programs:** Requires a court, in determining a defendant's eligibility for a judicial diversion program for alcohol or substance abuse treatment, to consider the underlying charges and the defendant's propensity for violent conduct. The bill also requires the facility treating a defendant under this diversion program to notify the local law enforcement of the defendant's placement and arrest record, and to submit a security plan to the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to provide for the safety of staff, residents and the community. Finally, this bill allows a defendant to appear via video conference, and makes unauthorized departure from a rehabilitation facility a D felony. [S1879A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1879A-2013), Senator John Bonacic (R-C-I, Mount Hope)

 **Reallocating funds from asset forfeitures:** Reduces the state share of certain asset forfeitures to increase allocations for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by localities for investigation and prosecution, and provides additional monies for the Chemical Dependence Service Fund. [S7658](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7658-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

 **Expanding the crime of operating as a major trafficker:** Facilitates convictions for operating as a major trafficker by reducing the number of people that must have participated from four to three, and lowering the minimum required proceeds from the sale of controlled substances during a 12-month period from $75,000 to $25,000. [S7663](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7663-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

 **Establishing the crime of transporting an opioid controlled substance:** Allows prosecution for a new crime when an individual unlawfully transports an opioid any distance greater than five miles within the state, or from one county to another county within the state, to address diversion and distribution of heroin and prescription drugs. [S7659](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7659-2013), Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County)

 **Facilitating the conviction of drug dealers:** Provides that possession of 50 or more packages of a Schedule I opium derivative, or possession of $300 or more worth of such drugs, is presumptive evidence of a person’s intent to sell. [S7169](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7169-2013), Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County)

 **Establishing criminal penalties for the theft of blank official New York State prescription forms:** Expands grand larceny in the fourth degree to include the theft of a blank official New York State prescription form. This bill would also redefine criminal possession of stolen property in the fourth degree to include the possession of a stolen New York State prescription form, and create an A misdemeanor of criminal possession of a prescription form. [S2940](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2940-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

 **Prosecuting acts by street gangs:** Creates the Criminal Street Gang Enforcement and Prevention Act to provide a comprehensive approach to protecting the public from gang-related crimes and violence, including those that relate to drug trafficking, and establishing the criminal street gang prevention fund. [S4444A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4444A-2013), Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn)

* **Preventing illegal drug sales by doctors and pharmacists:** Provides for an enhanced penalty – a B felony – for practitioners and pharmacists who abuse the standards of their respective profession and violate the public trust by illegally selling controlled substances. [S2941](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2941-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)
* **Increasing the penalties for theft of controlled substances:** Provides enhanced penalties for the theft of controlled substances, treating such crimes similarly to a theft of firearms, credit or debit cards, scientific secrets, or certain methamphetamine precursors. [S2431](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2431-2013), Senator Jeff Klein (D, Bronx)

**The Senate also passed the following bills related to curtailing drug use in New York that would:**

- Give state drug and law enforcement agencies and individuals the another tool to combat the quickly moving world of designer drugs by closing a loophole that allows manufacturers to avoid prosecution by making minor chemical alterations to drugs. [S2447](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2447-2013), Senator Jeff Klein (D, Bronx)

- Protect the safety of children and their families by providing enhanced penalties for the sale of controlled substances in playgrounds and park grounds. [S2173A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2173A-2013), Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn)

- Make the penalties for the possession and or sale of methamphetamine similar to that of the penalties for possession and/or sale of heroin and cocaine. [S3289](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3289-2013), Senator Thomas O’Mara (R-C, Bigflats)

- Penalize those who knowingly maintain a building in a fortified condition that is used to manufacture, package or distribute controlled substances or marihuana. [S3407B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3407B-2013), Senator Jeff Klein (D, Bronx)

- Implement an electronic tracking system on the sale of products containing pseudoephedrine, or ephedrine. This system will communicate in real time, across state lines and produce a stop sale notification to the seller of the product. [S4652B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4652B-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

- Establish a demonstration drug disposal program in representative rural, suburban and urban areas of the state in order to provide data that could be used to determine the most effective methods of disposal. [S3985A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3985A-2013), PBH, Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

- Helps prevent the abuse and diversion of opioid analgesic drugs by ensuring that opioid analgesic drugs that incorporate abuse-deterrent technologies are dispensed whenever possible. [S7125](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7125-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**Access to Naloxone**

The Senate passed legislation that will help save lives by increasing access to a highly effective antidote for accidental drug overdose known as Naloxone or Narcan. The bill allows authorized health care professionals to issue non-patient specific orders for Naloxone to certified training programs and pharmacies, which could then distribute the Naloxone kits and instruct how to properly administer it. If timely administered, Naloxone can prevent an overdose death. [S6477B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6477B-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau County)

**Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment for Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases**

In October 2013, Senate Majority Coalition Co-Leaders Dean Skelos and Jeffrey Klein created the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases to combat this growing epidemic.

In June the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases released a report and legislation that provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for a state action plan to enhance research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment for harmful tick-borne illnesses. For nine months the Task Force reviewed research, consulted with experts, heard from the public and worked to develop legislation and 19 recommendations to be incorporated into a New York State Action Plan on Lyme and tick-borne diseases.

**Lyme Treatment Legislation**

The Senate passed a bill recommended by the task force that codifies existing state health policy to ensure that determinations of effective and appropriate treatment of Lyme and other illnesses remain in the hands of medical professionals and does not subject practitioners to OPMC identification, investigation or charges based solely on their recommendation or provision of an innovative and effective treatment. [S7854](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7854-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

In addition:

* The Senate adopted a resolution calling on the Centers for Disease Control to reevaluate its guidance on Lyme and other tick-borne diseases and for the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, and other federal agencies to provide more funding for these diseases.
* The 2014-15 enacted budget included $500,000 to support recommendations of the Senate Majority Coalition Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Illnesses, along with supporting legislation ([S2115](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2115-2013)), PBH, Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton), for the creation of a 21st Century Work Group for Disease Elimination and Reduction within the Department of Health.
* The Senate will help increase public education through new informational brochures and wallet cards with important information about Lyme or tick-borne disease identification tools and resources.

**CPR In Schools**

The Senate passed legislation that would enable high school students to be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of automated defibrillators (AEDs). The bill requires the Commissioner of Education to make recommendations to the Board of Regents to enabling high schools to train students in hands-on CPR and the use of AEDs. [S7096](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7096-2013), PBH, Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

**Medical Marijuana**

A bill approved by the Legislature would establish a medical marijuana program to ensure it can be safely and effectively authorized by licensed physicians and used by patients with serious illnesses and life-threatening conditions, and is dispensed and administered in a manner that protects public health and safety. [S7923](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7923-2013), PBH, Senator Diane Savino (D, Staten Island/Brooklyn).

*2014-15 State Budget*

The state budget provides record support for a wide array of lifesaving health care services in communities across the state. Among the provisions in the budget are billions of dollars to ensure quality hospitals and nursing home facilities, funding for women’s and family health initiatives, a significantly expanded the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program to help seniors afford their prescription medications, and new legislation to help eliminate “surprise” out-of-network medical bills.

**Investments in Health Care Facilities and Patient Care --** The budget makes a $1.2 billion capital investment over seven years for the restructuring of health care facilities such as hospitals, clinics and nursing homes. Capital funds will help support the $8 billion federal Medicaid waiver that was recently approved for transformative projects to improve the health care system. To improve medical technology, the budget also included $95 million to create a statewide electronic medical record system. These and other investments will enhance the quality, financial viability and efficiency of New York’s health care delivery system to ensure that New Yorkers continue to have access to quality health care services.

**Substantial Funding for Health Initiatives**

The budget includes funding for a number of important individual and family health initiatives including:

> $25.3 million for Cancer Services Programs;

> $26.3 million for Nutritional Information for Women, Infants and Children;

> $2.3 million for the Prenatal Care Program;

> $4.5 million for Maternal and Child Health;

> $550,000 for Women’s Health Services;

> $533,300 for the Adelphi Breast Cancer Support Program;

> $1.8 million for the Prenatal and Postpartum Home Visitation Program;

> $34,700 for the Safe Motherhood Initiative;

> $10.6 million for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention;

> $1.8 million in increased funding for Rape Crisis Centers, bringing total funding to $3.6 million;

> $5 million in additional funding for the Spinal Cord Injury Research Board, bringing the total funding to $7 million;

> An additional $2.5 million for the Doctors Across New York Program;

> $2.45 million for initiatives to provide prevention, treatment and addiction services to address the growing problems of heroin and opioid abuse; and

> $500,000 for Lyme and tick-borne disease initiatives.

**Mandatory Treatment Plans for Dangerous Parolees with Mental Illness**

The Senate passed legislation in response to acts of senseless violence committed by recently released inmates with mental illnesses. These attacks have revealed that too many violent mentally ill convicts are released from prison without any mental health treatment plan in place upon their discharge. This tragic lapse in the system has resulted in numerous injuries and murders, as was the case with suspected child-killer Daniel St. Hubert, who is charged with going on a stabbing spree just days after being released from state prison. If there was a sufficient treatment plan in place, it might have prevented him from being a threat to the lives and safety of others.

This bill closes the loopholes that allowed St. Hubert to roam the streets without any medication or treatment from a community mental health care provider. This important legislation would also authorize parole officers to initiate an involuntary mental health commitment proceeding if a newly-released parolee fails to abide by the treatment requirements set or is otherwise recognized to be a threat. In some cases, a parole officer may be the only professional in direct contact with a parolee after their release, but they are currently not authorized to begin involuntary commitment proceedings. [S7818](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7818-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Protecting Consumers from Unexpected Out-of-Network Medical Bills**

The budget included legislation to protect consumers from unexpected medical bills from out-of-network physicians. A new dispute resolution process, network adequacy requirements, claim submission requirements, and improved disclosure by insurers will help consumers better navigate the insurance process and reduce the incidence of costly, surprise bills.

**Safe Patient Handling Act**

Nurses and other direct patient care workers in health care facilities often use their bodies to move and lift patients and have among the highest rates of on-the-job injuries, as well as potential injuries to patients. The budget included measures to help prevent these injuries through safe patient handling. Health care facilities must establish a safe patient handling program and conduct an annual performance evaluation of the program. The Department of Financial Services will also establish rules permitting facilities to obtain a reduced worker’s compensation rate for implementing these programs.

**Expanding the Accessibility of Telehealth and Telemedicine**

The Senate passed a bill that would create a Telehealth and Telemedicine parity so that individuals cannot be denied services based on the means by which the healthcare services are delivered. This legislation would require those services already available under an individual’s policy, to be delivered through Telehealth and Telemedicine. [S7852](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7852-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

Another bill passed by the Senate would consolidate all public health law provisions related to Telehealth and Telemedicine to a single article in the public health law. With the increased use of innovative Telehealth and Telemedicine tools and technology to provide healthcare, this bill will provide for improved accessibility and transparency of related laws. [S4355](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4355-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C,Olean)

**Donate Life Registry**

To encourage more people to save lives through organ and tissue donation, the budget includes changes to the operation of the state’s Donate Life Registry. It requires the Commissioners of Health, DMV and Board of Elections to examine steps that might be taken by the state agencies to enhance the registries’ performance and requires the selection of a not-for-profit organization experienced in working with procurement organizations and affiliated with New York’s donation community to permanently operate and promote the Registry.

**Early Intervention Payments**

The state budget provides $163 million for early intervention programs, which offer a variety of therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The Senate Republican Conference also succeeded in obtaining an allocation of $3.9 million in this budget for state payments to early intervention providers. The funding will support providers’ unpaid claims from April 1, 2013 to June 30, 2013, when the state’s early intervention program first began requiring insurance claims to be completed before the state and local shares would be paid.

Other bills passed during this year’s legislative session include:

**Protecting School Children With Severe Allergies**

The Senate passed legislation that authorizes schools to have and administer the life saving medicine, epinephrine, when a student has a severe allergic reaction. According to Food Allergy Education and Research, food allergies affect one in every 13 children in the United States -- estimated to be two children per classroom. Allergic reactions can range from mild skin rashes to severe anaphylaxis -- a full-body and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction that can stop respiration and heartbeat within seconds.

The first line of defense for anaphylaxis is epinephrine, which often comes in the form of an auto-injector or widely used EpiPen. The timely administration of epinephrine to a child suffering from a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction could mean the difference between life and death. [S7262A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7262A-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau)

**Kendra’s Law**

The Senate passed legislation that would amend “Kendra’s Law” to require all inmates with mental illness be given a psychiatric evaluation to see if Kendra’s Law is appropriate, before they are released. This crucial bill would apply to inmates such as Daniel St. Hubert – a paranoid schizophrenic with a history of violence who refused treatment in prison, was released without counseling or medication, and days later allegedly stabbed two young children, killing one and injuring the other, in Brooklyn.

Kendra’s Law directs prison officials to evaluate mentally ill inmates before they’re discharged, and, if necessary, recommend that inmates be ordered into the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program once they’re released. However, that current requirement does not apply if the inmate refuses mental health services, as in the case of St. Hubert. [S2225D](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2225D-2013), Senator Cathy Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Massage Therapist Continuing Education**

The Senate gave final legislative passage to legislation to permit licensed massage therapists from other states and countries to provide hands-on clinical instruction at continuing education programs in New York. [S6712A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6712A-2013), PBH, Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Dentists Across New York**

The Senate passed legislation making dentists eligible for the widely successful “Doctors Across New York” program. In many rural regions and inner-cities there has been a shortage of dentists, leaving many New Yorkers without access to essential dental care. A concerted recruitment effort is needed to address the shortfall and incentivize dentists to practice in these areas. This legislation would assist dentists with education loan repayments in exchange for committing to practice dentistry for five years in an underserved area of New York. By increasing access to dental care, it will greatly enhance prevention, provide for early diagnosis and intervention, and slow or prevent the progression of dental diseases. [S2190B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2190B-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Traumatic Brain Injury Management Program**

The Senate passed a bill that would strengthen and improve the treatment and management of traumatic brain injuries, further improving the already stringent standards on concussion identification and management. This bill would create a concussion management advisory committee within the state Department of Health’s (DOH) Traumatic Brain Injury Services Coordinating Council (TBISCC). The committee would in charge of developing methods to raise public awareness and provide more information on recognizing and managing concussions and mild traumatic brain injuries, taking into account the latest scientific and academic advancements in the field. [S7004A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7004A-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**HOUSING**

**Affordable Housing Investment**

The Senate passed legislation that would allow the New York State Low Income Tax Credit (SLIC) to be treated as a refundable tax credit. This bill would stimulate affordable housing development throughout the state by making the credit more desirable to investors, thereby increasing its value to leverage affordable housing investments – resulting in the construction of additional affordable housing throughout the state. [S3848A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3848A-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Expanded MWBE in New York City Housing**

This Senate passed legislation that would allow New York City to encourage the expanded use of women and minority owned businesses in loans and contracts for housing, as well as in urban renewal and urban development action plan areas to help address recently identified disparities in a recent study. [S5928](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5928-2013), PBH, Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**TRANSPORTATION**

*2014-2015 State Budget*

The enacted budget provides critically important funding for roads, bridges, transit. The unprecedented new investments in our state’s infrastructure and transportation not only improves the quality of life for all New Yorkers, but also keeps our economy moving.

Highlights of the transportation budget include:

**Local Road Improvement Funding**: The budget sustains record-level funding of $438 million for the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs). These investments will benefit counties, cities, towns, and villages throughout New York and help municipalities undertake new infrastructure repair projects.

**Capital Transportation Projects**: The budget includes $3.7 billion to be used to improve roads, and bridges, as well as projects in rail, aviation, and transit.

**Filling Potholes**: The brutal winter resulted in a significant number of potholes and road surface damage. It also depleted local budgets for repairs. This budget provided $40 million in capital for municipalities.

**Investing in Public Transit:** The budget includes a total of $178.7 million for upstate public transit. That is an increase of $5.1 million. The increase includes $2.8 million which represents the first year of a new initiative that will provide annual aid increases to assist upstate transit now, and in the future.

The budget includes $4.91 billion for mass transit, including $4.34 billion for the MTA, which is an $85 million increase in operation aid. It also includes $290 million for the downstate non-MTA systems.

In addition to these initiatives, the state budget provides ways to keep our roads and drivers safe. More funding is going towards curtailing dangerous texting-while-driving. Young and new drivers convicted of texting-while-driving will have their licenses suspended for 120 days for the first offense, and a year for the second offense.

*Additional transportation bill passed by the Senate include:*

**Town Speed Limit Mandate Relief**

The Senate passed mandate relief legislation that would authorize towns to set speed limits within their own jurisdictions. The bill would authorize towns to establish maximum speed limits on all town highways that are functionally classified as local roads. Speed limits would be less than the 55 miles per hour statutory maximum speed limit. [S1356](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1356-2013), Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Integrated Transportation for People with Developmental Disabilities**

The Senate passed a bill to improve transportation for people with developmental disabilities. Finding transportation for developmentally disabled individuals can be a difficult challenge, especially in rural areas. This legislation would direct the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Commissioner of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to establish an integrated transportation demonstration program for people with developmental disabilities. [S7798](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7798-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean)

**Auto Insurance Proof on Your Smartphone**

The New York State Senate passed legislation that would enable drivers to have proof of auto insurance on their smartphones, rather than having to produce a paper insurance card. Thirty-one states already allow drivers to prove insurance coverage with a wireless device. The bill would allow motorists the option to use a cell phone or other mobile electronic devise to provide proof of insurance coverage instead of having to present a printed card. [S5068C](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5068C-2013), Senator Simcha Felder (D, Brooklyn)

**VETERANS**

*2014-15 State Budget*

The state budget provides $3.1 million for veterans assistance programs, expanded eligibility for the Gold Star Parent Annuity, and includes a new measure that will include veteran businesses within the Department of Economic Development’s Entrepreneurial Assistance Program.

The Senate passed the following legislation to benefit veterans:

**State Contracts for Disabled Veterans**

The Senate spearheaded a new law to facilitate the awarding of state contracts to disabled veterans. The bill would create a six percent state contract set-aside for service-connected disabled- veteran owned small businesses. The “Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Act” will ensure New York State’s service-connected disabled veterans are better able to compete for millions of dollars in state contracts. [S6865](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6865-2013), Chapter 22, Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)

**Awarding High School Diplomas to Veterans**

The Senate passed legislation that would make all veterans eligible for “Operation Recognition,” which allows veterans to be awarded a high school degree based on their knowledge and experience gained while in the military.

This legislation would expand eligibility for this nationwide program to all military service veterans who served in the United States military and did not complete their education after their term of service. [S6292](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6292-2013), Senator Mark Grisanti (R-I, North Buffalo)

**Tax Relief Measures for Veterans would:**

* Extends the alternative veterans' property tax exemption by local option to active members of the military. Currently, only honorably discharged veterans are eligible for the exemption. [S3931](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3931-2013), Senator Lee Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley)
* Honor disabled veterans who sacrificed their health and wellbeing for the safety of our country by authorizing local governments to provide a property tax exemption to 100-percent-disabled veterans who served in a combat theatre or combat zone of operations, or their unmarried surviving spouses. [S4136A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4136A-2013), Senator Andrew Lanza (R-I-C, Staten Island)
* Authorize local governments to create a property tax exemption for active duty military forces and reservists that are ordered to active duty. [S6429](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6429-2013), Senator Pat Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma)
* Encourage more school districts to authorize a veterans’ property tax exemption by giving school districts the authority to repeal the benefit in the event of a negative change to the district’s economic circumstances. Some districts have not enacted the tax exemptions for veterans because of concerns it could not be reversed in the future if the need arose. [S6781](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6781-2013), PBH, Senator David Carlucci (D, Rockland County)
* Assist active duty combat veterans by allowing municipalities to grant the additional combat veteran property tax exemption to persons who have been discharged from the service, then re-enlisted, served in combat, and are now returned and residing in New York State, but have not yet been again discharged. Soldiers who have returned to New York from combat in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, but who have not yet been discharged from service, have found that although they are eligible for the regular 15 percent veterans’ exemption as a result of their earlier discharge, they are not eligible for the additional 10 percent combat exemption because they have not been discharged from their subsequent service. [S1435](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1435-2013), Senator Michael Ranzenhofer (R-C-I, Amherst)
* Exempt certain non-profit veterans organizations from tax on non-highway diesel motor fuel used for heating purposes. [S3572A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3572A-2013), Senator James Seward (R-C-I, Oneonta)

**The Senate also approved the following bills that would:**

* Provide a 60-day stay of suspension and revocation of licenses and registrations of military service personnel while on active duty, and would additionally reverse in absentia convictions of vehicle and traffic violations of such military service personnel while on active duty, without prejudice for refiling. [S6821](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6821-2013), Senator Lee Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley)
* Allow those with military service and an honorable discharge to attend classes at SUNY CUNY on a tuition-free audit basis. [S1963](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1963-2013), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome)
* Make college more affordable for those in military service by including active duty and honorably discharged veterans who attend college under the new GI bill within the definition of resident for in-state tuition eligibility at community colleges and state-aided four-year colleges. [S1978](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1978-2013), Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester)
* Change the eligibility dates for a military service recognition scholarship to include conflicts that occurred after June 1, 1982, including Lebanon (1982), Grenada (1983), and Libya (1986). [S1051](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S1051-2013), Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane):
* Allow veterans holding a federal Golden Access Passport or federal Access Pass to be able to access state recreational facilities free of charge. [S7617A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7617A-2013), Senator Dean Skelos (R, Rockville Centre)
* Require the Division of Veteran Affairs to maintain a fact sheet on their website containing contact information for all veterans’ integrated service networks located within the state and contact information for the United States veterans health administration. Hospitals will then be required to provide veteran patients with a copy of the fact sheet maintained by the division. [S5735A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5735A-2013), Senator Lee Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley)

**Honoring Veterans and their Families**

Measures would:

* Authorize the adjutant general of the State of New York to present a medal known as the “New York State Korean War Service Medal.” [S6160](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6160-2013), Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C, Halfmoon)
* Authorize the adjutant general of the State of New York to present a medal known as the “New York State Vietnam War Service Medal.” [S6161](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S6161-2013), Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C, Halfmoon)
* Establish a “Bronze Star Recipient” and “Silver Star Recipient” license plate to be issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles upon proof that the applicant is a Bronze or Silver Star recipient, or the spouse of a recipient. The DMV already issues plates for Purple Heart recipients. [S4198](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4198-2013), Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton)
* Establish a “gold star father” distinctive license plate to the father or the spouse of a father of a fallen soldier. A “gold star mother” plate has been available since 1991. [S970A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S970A-2013), Senator Tom Libous (R-C-I, Binghamton)
* Upon surrendering a set of “gold star mother” license plates, this bill would allow the gold star mother to keep and retain one of the plates for commemorative purposes. [S3554](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3554-2013), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome)
* Create a “New York State Veterans Remembrance” license plate that can be issued to a veteran or spouse of a veteran. [S7122](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7122-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)
* Provide legal protections for veterans memorials in New York State by establishing official recognition for the importance these memorials serve in honoring the sacrifices of our veterans. The bill is in response to actions taken by some municipalities and school districts that removed war memorials from their property without providing for the preservation, moving or replacement of the memorial. [S3869](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3869-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)
* Protects the voting rights of active duty service members who make the ultimate sacrifice by requiring that the ballots of deceased military personnel be counted toward the election for which they were cast. [S2655A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2655A-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C, I, Patterson)
* Authorize local governments to allow a veteran, or the unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran, who was receiving a veterans exemption on real property within the county (or New York City) to continue to receive the exemption if they move to a new home within the same county (or within New York City). [S2652](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S2652-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)
* Remove the issue of military deployment as a factor in the consideration for awarding child custody when a suitable child care plan is presented. [S3507A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3507A-2013), Senator Greg Ball (R-C-I, Patterson)

**Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund**

The Senate gave final passage to a measure that will create a Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund to support military servicemen and women who need help with housing. The bill allows New Yorkers to contribute to the fund when filing their personal income taxes. [S4760A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4760A-2013), PBH, Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola)

**Homes for Heroes Program**

The Senate passed legislation that would establish a “Homes for Heroes” program within the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation. This measure would provide grants to eligible not-for-profits and municipalities to develop programs to make necessary retrofits and accessibility alterations to the homes of disabled veterans. Many disabled veterans in New York face significant difficulty accessing and affording housing modifications such as wheelchair ramps or the widening of doorways. [S7699](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7699-2013), Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C,Olean)

**Allowing Honorably Discharged Veterans to Purchase Service Credit**

The Senate passed legislation that would allow military veterans who served during any period of conflict and work in the public sector, to purchase service credit for up to three years of military serviced performed. Under current law, only veterans who served during certain specified periods of war are eligible for this benefit. [S7839](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7839-2013), PBH, Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson)

**WOMEN’S ISSUES**

During the 2014 legislative session, the Senate passed its Women’s Equality Agenda, which included the following legislation:

**Prevent Human Trafficking and Protect Trafficked Victims**

The Senate passed legislation to save lives by preventing the exploitation of children and adults who are victims of human trafficking. The Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act toughens penalties against those who buy and sell young women, men and children and reduces the stigma defendants may face when they are victims of the massive $32 billion sex trafficking industry.

Key provisions of the measure include increasing the accountability of traffickers and buyers by raising the penalty for sex trafficking to a class B violent felony; creating the felony sex offense of “aggravated patronizing a minor”; and aligning the penalties for patronizing a minor with those of statutory rape.

The bill will also strengthen the investigative tools to make a case against traffickers. Sex trafficking will be an affirmative defense to prostitution and the term “prostitute” will be eliminated from the Penal Law, as that term stigmatizes defendants who are in fact victims of sex trafficking. Nowhere else in the state’s Penal Law are individuals identified by the crime they allegedly committed. [S5879B](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5879B-2013), Senator Andrew Lanza (R-I-C, Staten Island)

**Ensuring Equal Pay**

The Senate approved legislation that would ensure that women receive the wages they are entitled to by prohibiting employers from paying employees disparate amounts due to gender.

In New York, on average, a woman working full time is paid $42,113 per year, while a man working full time is paid $50,388 per year. This creates a wage gap of $8,275 between full-time working men and women in the state. The bill would ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work. [S5872](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5872-2013), Senator Diane Savino (D, Staten Island)

**End Pregnancy Discrimination in the Workplace**

The Senate passed legislation that would require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with pregnancy-related medical conditions. The bill would require employers to perform a reasonable accommodation analysis for employees with conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth. A pregnancy-related condition would be treated as a temporary disability. Additionally, it would codify in law a regulation that an employee must provide medical or other information to verify the existence of the condition. The reasonable accommodation would not have to be granted if it imposed an undue hardship on an employer. [S5880](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5880-2013), Senator Kemp Hannon (R-C-I, Garden City)

**Prohibiting Sexual Harassment**

The Senate unanimously approved a bill that would ensure that all employees are protected from sexual harassment by applying existing protections to businesses of all sizes.

Sexual harassment disproportionately affects women in the workplace. In 2011, women filed 75 percent of all sexual harassment complaints filed at the New York State Division of Human Rights and 83 percent of all sexual harassment complaints filed at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. [S5873](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5873-2013), Senator David Valesky (D, Oneida)

**Preventing Housing Discrimination Against Domestic Violence Victims**

The Senate also unanimously passed legislation to protect victims of domestic violence from housing discrimination. This measure would prohibit discrimination against domestic violence victims in housing, and, under the provisions of the bill, a violation of this prohibition would be a misdemeanor. The legislation also allows the option of a civil action for a violation of the prohibition. [S5876](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5876-2013), Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester)

**Stopping Discrimination Based on Family Status**

The Senate unanimously passed legislation to help working mothers by preventing discrimination in the hiring and promotion of people with families. The bill prohibits employers from denying work or promotions based on family status, such as parents and women who are pregnant. Existing law only prohibits discrimination based on family status in credit and housing, but not employment -- which can have a negative impact on women with children. [S5875](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5875-2013), Senator Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Removing Barriers to Remedying Discrimination**

The Senate also approved legislation that would remove barriers to remedying discrimination. The bill would allow successful parties in employment or credit discrimination cases based on sex to recover attorney’s fees. [S5874](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5874-2013), Senator Elizabeth Little (R-C-I, Queensbury)

**Allow for Electronic Filing of Orders of Protection**

In addition, the Senate passed legislation that would allow domestic violence victims to electronically file for orders of protection. The legislation creates a pilot program to allow domestic violence victims to seek temporary orders of protection through electronic means rather than having to appear in person.

The bill also requires the Office of Court Administration to review and update their policies and services for all crime victims in the courts to make sure that their needs are being met so victims are truly protected. [S5878](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5878-2013), Senator Cathy Young (R-I-C, Olean)

All of these measures were also passed in June 2013 as part of the Senate’s Women’s Equality Agenda.

Legislation was enacted into law last year that strengthened orders of protection for domestic violence victims by clarifying that a victim for whom an order of protection is issued cannot be arrested for violating that same order; ([S5605, Chapter 12 Laws of 2013](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5605-2013)), Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester)

Additional legislation passed this year includes:

**Aggravated Harassment Law**

The Senate passed legislation that would clarify a state law related to the crime of Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree, that was declared unconstitutional by the state Court of Appeals last year. The bill would criminalize harassing communications that threaten to cause physical harm to a victim or the victim’s property where a defendant knows or should know that the communication will cause the victim to fear such harm. [S7734A](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7734A-2013), Senator Michael Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette)

**Create Website Devoted to Women’s Health**

The Senate passed a bill that would direct the New York State Department of Health (DOH) to establish an internet website devoted to women's health initiatives. The website would providecrucial and timely information on health issues and initiatives for women. The availability of such educational materials and resources will help raise awareness among women in the state of New York, while also encouraging use of 22 preventative health services that are widely available and that do not require a patient deductible or co-pay under federal law. [S3817](http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S3817-2013), PBH, Senator Kemp Hannon (R-Nassau)