



## Taking Action To Reform The Criminal Justice System



*On June 20, 2019 the NYS Senate passed historic legislation to further decriminalize marijuana and create a more equitable cannabis policy.*

This year, I've worked tirelessly to begin fixing our broken criminal justice system. The justice reforms that we passed will ensure that New Yorkers' constitutional right to a speedy trial is protected and that no New Yorker is incarcerated before trial due to their inability to pay cash bail. Additionally, we made strides in the process of legalization of cannabis by decriminalizing marijuana and establishing procedures for record expungements. We also took major steps on agreed administrative changes to solitary confinement. As we move forward, my colleagues and I are committed to continuing this work to reform our justice system.

## Honoring Our Veterans and First Responders



*NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins celebrates local veterans and their service to our nation.*

The brave men and women in our armed forces have risked life and limb to defend our freedom, and we owe them a great debt. This year, my colleagues and I have passed legislation to further improve veterans' services. This includes:

- Creating a toll-free hotline to assist with veteran services, benefits, and crisis-support;
- Expanding tax exemptions for dual-veteran households;
- Providing employment benefits and academic credits;
- Ensuring military voters have the opportunity to vote in school district elections

We have also passed measures to support our first responders, who risk their lives to protect us. These measures include:

- Improving accessibility of enhanced cancer disability benefits for volunteer firefighters;
- Reducing harmful chemicals in firefighting activities;
- Increasing fire safety measures for newly constructed homes;
- Authorizing firefighters outside of NYC to possess or administer epinephrine.

## Protecting New Yorkers With Common-Sense Gun Safety Legislation



*NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins stands with White Plains Mayor Tom Roach and constituents to recognize Gun Violence Awareness Day.*

It is state government's responsibility to protect our communities and keep families safe. We have seen far too many mass shootings, many of them at schools. We stepped up to lead the fight to protect our children and our communities from gun violence. Stopping gun violence should not be a partisan issue. Following years of inaction, this session we took historic action on passing common-sense gun safety legislation that:

- Keeps firearms out of the hands of dangerous or unstable individuals and children via Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) that allow law enforcement officials, family and household members and certain school officials to seek a court order requiring a person likely to harm themselves or others to relinquish any firearms in their possession;
- Directs the State Police to devise regulations for gun buyback programs so that all buyback programs across the State are operated consistently with uniform best practices;
- Bans bump stocks which accelerate the rate of fire of a firearm;
- Establishes an extension of time up to thirty calendar days for national in-state background checks;
- Requires out-of-state applicants for gun permits to allow New York permitting authorities to review out-of-state mental health records;
- Prevents school districts from arming teachers.

## Strengthening New York's Democracy

Improving our democracy is necessary to earn the public's trust and increase voter participation. The Senate Majority passed historic voting reforms this legislative session and have worked tirelessly to protect New Yorkers' constitutional rights. We fought hard to:

- Pass early voting reforms to permit eligible voters in New York State to vote in person during a designated period;
- Close the LLC Loophole so that the total contribution limit is capped at \$5,000;
- Amend the constitution to remove the ten-day advance voter registration requirement, subject to second passage of the next legislature and approval by a state referendum;
- Enable 16- and 17-year olds to pre-register to vote and require local boards of education to adopt policies to promote student voter registration and pre-registration;
- Require the Board of Elections to transfer the registration and enrollment of a voter to wherever they move in New York State;
- Save tax payer dollars and make state primary elections the same day as federal primary elections, and ensure that New York State's election law complies with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act;



*The NYS Senate Majority passed historic voting reforms this legislative session.*

the savings from consolidating primary election dates will more than pay for New York's new early voting system, and still put money back in local governments; the savings will be approximately \$25 million annually, while the costs of early voting are anticipated to be approximately \$6.4 million or slightly more annually.



Standing Up For Survivors



NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins at the January 28, 2019 press conference on the Child Victims Act.

After fighting on behalf of survivors of child sex abuse for more than a decade, victims’ voices were finally heard. We successfully passed the Child Victims Act and removed barriers that had been protecting predators for too long and rightfully helped victims seek justice.



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Constituent Services

My doors are open from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. every weekday to anyone looking for assistance. You can also propose ideas for a new program or law or express your support for existing legislation! You can visit my office at 28 Wells Avenue (Building #3) in Yonkers, send an email to [scousins@nysenate.gov](mailto:scousins@nysenate.gov), or call (914) 423-4031 to make your voice heard. *Hablamos español.*

Supporting Our LGBTQ Friends, Family And Neighbors



NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins stands with constituents at the 2018 Yonkers PRIDE event.

I am proud to stand with my colleagues, passing the first significant LGBTQ legislation since marriage equality in 2011. We continued our progress by expanding services, support, and protections for the LGBTQ communities of New York State. We passed GENDA to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or expression, added Transgender New Yorkers to those protected by the State’s Hate Crime Laws and abolished the “Gay Panic” defense. We also passed legislation banning conversion therapy, prohibiting mental health professionals from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts with a patient under the age of eighteen. The bills passed this legislative session showed our LGBTQ communities that we support them and believe in their rights.

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Update from New York State  
Senate Majority Leader  
ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS

Dear Friend,

It is an honor to serve as your representative in the New York State Senate and a privilege to guide my colleagues as the Majority Leader of the Senate Democrats. Thanks to their dedication to empowering all New Yorkers, the 2019 Legislative Session was one of the most productive in state history. I am proud we worked hard to ensure people from across New York, upstate and downstate, were heard as we passed common-sense legislation that had been backlogged in Albany for too long. We proved what can be accomplished by working together, and with the people of this great State.

In January, we were sent to Albany with the goal of tearing down barriers and creating opportunities for all. We delivered sweeping reforms that New Yorkers had been demanding for years including: Common-sense gun legislation to keep our families and communities safe; The Child Victims Act to help survivors of child sex abuse seek justice; The DREAM Act to take steps to make higher education accessible to children, who, while undocumented, may have spent much or most of their lives in the U.S.; The Reproductive Health Act and Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act to guarantee New York women’s rights are protected, despite efforts around the nation to roll them back; GENDA and banning Gay Conversion Therapy to support and protect our LGBTQ communities; and voting reforms to make it easier for New Yorkers to participate in the democratic process.

I am proud of my colleagues for establishing New York as a national and international leader in environmental protection by passing the historic Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) to combat the effects of climate change, create green jobs, and promote environmental justice across the State.

Together we fought to pass critical criminal justice reforms to begin fixing a broken system; held multiple hearings on sexual harassment for the first time in 27 years to modernize our outdated laws; advanced Green Light NY to increase road safety and help our economy grow; and solidified equal rights by banning the practice of salary inquiries from employees and promoting a more equal work environment.

We made the property tax cap permanent, providing real tax relief to Westchester communities, and enacted a budget that provides the largest amount of school aid in state history, including \$29.1 million more than in the past for our local schools, a 6.7% increase. During the final weeks of the


session, we stepped up to pass the strongest affordable housing and pro-tenant legislation in New York State history, protecting tenants in Westchester and throughout the State.

This year, the Senate Majority has also passed significant legislation to support the growth of small businesses in our state. This includes legislation to provide tax relief, establish crime prevention services, and create programs to aid business development. Additionally, we have continued to support opportunities for Minority and Women-Owned Businesses by extending the MWBE program until 2024 and allocating funds to provide further assistance to these businesses. As your Senator, I am proud to support initiatives that will grow our small businesses and our state’s economy.

I am grateful for my colleagues who worked together in today’s unsettling political environment to restore New York as a beacon not only of resistance, but of progress, hope, and action. While we closed a historic legislative session, please know our work is not done. Barriers still need to be broken down to guarantee every New Yorker has the opportunity to realize their full potential.

I look forward to connecting with my Westchester community and gearing up over the coming months to ensure we begin the 2020 legislative session just as strong as we did this year.

My number one priority is serving you, my constituents in Yonkers, White Plains, New Rochelle, Greenburgh and Scarsdale. Your feedback continues to guide my work in the Capitol, and I remain committed to fighting for our most important shared values. I will continue to update you on the happenings in our State and hope you find this summary of our initial accomplishments during the beginning of session helpful. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact my office.

Best Regards,  
  
Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
President Pro Tem, Majority Leader  
New York State Senator, 35th District

