
News from STATE SENATOR
Liz Krueger



**COMMUNITY
BULLETIN**

February 2010

New York State Senate - 26th District

Message from Liz . . .

The Governor has introduced his budget and my colleagues and I are now evaluating his proposals. In my role as Vice-Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, I have been attending each of the thirteen budget hearings during which agency heads explain the budget proposal, and advocates and nonprofits discuss the impact of the proposal on the communities they represent and serve. One thing is clear – there will be severe impacts by this year’s budget on education, healthcare, social services and local governments. Governor Paterson’s budget must address a \$7.4 billion shortfall in revenues for 2010-11.

In addressing this deficit, the Governor has proposed an array of painful cuts, including an across-the-board cut of \$500 million from agency budgets. School aid would be reduced by \$1.1 billion, State healthcare funding would be cut by \$1 billion. There would be a \$79 million cut to the Environmental Protection Fund, with a moratorium on land acquisition though the fund. There would be a \$75 million cut to all TAP awards for college students and a \$56 million cut to community college aid. Cuts to programs for the homeless and supportive housing funded through Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) would be cut by \$69 million. There is no doubt that if these cuts are implemented they will cause significant harm to fundamental programs throughout the State. And there is also no doubt that either these cuts or others identified by the Legislature must be made in order to address the serious financial crisis we are in.

As I evaluate proposed cuts, I will be focusing on ensuring that they do not fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable New Yorkers or on any particular region of the State. I am concerned that, in certain proposals, the Governor’s budget will have a disproportionate impact on New York City.

First, the Governor proposes complete elimination of Aid to Municipalities (AIM) funding for New York City with much smaller cuts for the rest of the State. The \$301.7 million cut the city is facing accounts for 94% of the \$320.2 million in AIM reductions State-wide. Almost every other county is facing merely an average 2-5% cut in comparison to the City’s 100%.

Second, the Governor’s budget restructures the STAR program by limiting the NYC Personal Income Tax STAR Benefit. This is a backdoor tax increase which will cost New York City residents an estimated \$200 million in new taxes. STAR has always disproportionately benefited land-owners outside of New York City and that fact will only be exacerbated by the limiting of the NYC Personal Income Tax STAR Benefit.

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Third, proposed social service cuts are likely to disproportionately impact New York City, as well as the most vulnerable New Yorkers throughout the State. The budget proposes elimination of a number of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funded programs (such as Supportive Housing for Families, Summer Youth Employment, Flexible Fund for Family Services, Child Care Subsidies) and reduction in various homeless, refugee and employment programs (such as the Homeless Intervention Program, Citizenship Program, NYS Refugee Resettlement Assistance Program and HIV Welfare-to-Work Program). These cuts would have a devastating impact.

Identifying the problems with the Governor's proposal is the easy part – the hard part will be coming up with alternative proposals which will achieve the same or greater savings. In the weeks between now and the April 1st budget deadline, this is my primary job, and I welcome your feedback as to how best to address the fiscal crisis we face.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Senator Liz Krueger
and
Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh

invite you to a

Co-op/Condo Forum

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

6:00PM – 8:00PM

Baruch College – CUNY

School of Public Affairs, Room 301

135 East 22nd Street

NO RSVP NECESSARY

For more information,

e-mail Alice Fisher at alicefisher.nyc@gmail.com or call (212) 490-9535.

P.S. 267 – A Proposed New Elementary School for the Upper East Side

The Department of Education has proposed a new elementary school, P.S. 267, for the 2010-11 school year, which will serve grades K-5 and will be incubated in P.S. 158 (located on York Avenue at 77th Street). During its incubation P.S. 267 will be co-located with P.S. 158 on its top two floors. P.S. 267 will open with approximately 60-75 kindergarten students in 2010-2011. An additional grade will be added each school year and the school will eventually serve approximately 350-450 elementary school students. The DOE further proposes that P.S. 267 will eventually move to its own building at 213 East 63rd Street which is the school currently known as MEETH.

P.S. 267 will give priority admission to students zoned for P.S. 59, P.S. 183 and P.S. 290, which are nearby elementary schools which are severely overcrowded. The incubation of a new elementary

school in P.S. 158 addresses the need to provide additional elementary capacity in the Upper East Side neighborhood of District 2.

I know that the community has many views on this matter and so I urge you to take advantage of the opportunities the DOE is providing for public comment as follows:

- 1) A public hearing for this proposal will be held at P.S. 158 on March 9, 2010 at 6:00PM;
- 2) Questions about the proposal can be directed to Kim Wong at the DOE Office of Portfolio Planning by e-mailing Portfolio@schools.nyc.gov or by calling Ms. Wong at (212) 374-5084;
- 3) Written comments can be sent to D02Proposals@schools.nyc.gov; and
- 4) Messages about the proposal can be left at (718) 935-4415.

The DOE proposal will be voted on at the next PEP meeting which is scheduled for March 22, 2010 at 6:00PM. The March PEP meeting will take place at The Michael J. Petrides School located at 715 Ocean Terrace, Staten Island.

Get A Rebate for Trading In Your Old, Inefficient Appliances:

This month, New York State residents can participate in the Great Appliance Swap-Out, a program designed to provide a boost to New York's economy while providing an incentive for consumers to reduce their energy consumption. Under the program, residents will be able to receive a cash rebate for replacing an older appliance(s) with a new ENERGY STAR-qualified appliance. This program, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), will also provide added incentives for consumers who recycle their old appliances to help reduce the impact on landfills.

Under New York State's proposed plan, consumers can receive rebates for purchasing eligible appliances individually or in a bundle of three specific appliances. Only appliances with an ENERGY STAR label denoting higher efficiency are eligible for a rebate. Consumers may receive a larger rebate by purchasing three eligible appliances which meet standards issued by the Consortium of Energy Efficiency (CEE) that are higher than ENERGY STAR standards. **ENERGY STAR appliances must be purchased between February 12–21, 2010 to be eligible for a rebate.**

As proposed, customers purchasing appliances would qualify for a rebate of \$75 (\$105 with documented recycling) for ENERGY STAR qualified refrigerators, \$75 (\$100 with documented recycling) for clothes washers and \$50 (\$75 with documented recycling) for freezers. Rebates are available for dishwashers when they are purchased as part of a three-appliance package (refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer), which may qualify for a \$500 rebate (\$555 with documented recycling). For application information or more details on the rebate programs, visit www.NYApplianceSwapOut.com.

Free Tax Preparation Sites:

A number of organizations offer free assistance with tax preparation. I encourage you to take advantage of these services, which can save you money and ensure you avoid getting caught in "Refund Anticipation Loan" scams that many for-profit tax preparers engage in. Here are some sites in the 26th Senatorial District where you can get free assistance with your taxes:

- **58th Street Library**, 127 East 58th Street
Directions: 4,5 and 6 trains to Lexington Avenue-59th Street
Telephone: (212) 759-7358
Dates: February 2, 2010 - April 15, 2010
Site Hours: Tuesday: 1PM - 5PM; Saturday: 10:30AM - 2:30PM
Income Limits: No income restrictions; sponsored by AARP
Assistance available: This site prepares current-year tax returns and does electronic filing of returns only.
- **Baruch College**, 151 East 25th Street (between Lexington and Third), Library Building, 1st Floor

Directions: 6 train to 28th Street

Dates: February 4, 2010 - April 15, 2010; Closed on February 12

Site Hours: Tuesday - Thursday: 12PM - 8PM; Friday: 12PM - 7PM; Saturday: 10AM - 4PM

Languages: Spanish available on Saturdays

Income Limits: To qualify, clients must earn less than \$75,000 regardless of filing status.

- **Hunter College**, 695 Park Avenue (corner of Lexington Avenue)

Directions: 6 train to 68th Street

Telephone: (212) 772-4219

Dates: February 8, 2010 - April 14, 2010

Site Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 6PM-9PM; Saturday: 11AM-2PM

Languages: Monday: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Hindi, Russian, Serbian, Tagalog; Tuesday: Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog; Thursday: Bengali, Chinese-Cantonese, Korean, Lithuanian, Russian, Tagalog; Saturday: Chinese-Cantonese, German, Korean, Tagalog

Income Limits: To qualify, clients with children must earn less than \$50,000 and clients without children must earn less than \$18,000.

- **Lenox Hill Neighborhood House**, 331 East 70th Street

Directions: 6 train to 68th Street

Telephone: (212) 744-5022 x1374

Dates: February 5, 2010 - April 15, 2010

Site Hours: Friday: 12:30PM - 3:30PM

Income Limits: No income restrictions; sponsored by AARP

Assistance available: This site prepares current-year tax returns and does electronic filing of returns only.

- **Stein Senior Center**, 340 East 24th Street

Directions: 6 train to 23rd Street

Telephone: (212) 585-6292

Dates: February 4, 2010 - April 15, 2010

Site Hours: Thursday: 9:30AM - 3PM

Income Limits: No income restrictions; sponsored by AARP.

Assistance available: This site prepares current-year tax returns and does electronic filing of returns only.

Con Ed Musician Residency Program Seeking Applicants:

NYC Performing Arts Spaces is pleased to announce an open call for applications for the Spring 2010 round of the Con Edison Musicians' Residency: Composition Program. New York City-based composers in all genres are invited to apply for one of six (6) three-month residencies at one of three cultural facilities, one of which is the Turtle Bay Music School. The newly-expanded residency program will provide awardees with use of suitable composition and rehearsal space for a three-month period starting in Spring 2010. Each composer-in-residence will also receive a stipend. Applications must be submitted by February 26, 2010. For an application or more information, visit http://nycpaspaces.org/show/resources/musicians_residency.html.

Census 2010 – Count Me In – Our Community Counts:

The 2010 Census is a count of everyone living in the United States and is mandated by the U.S. Constitution. Federal, State and local governments, as well as businesses, base their decisions on Census data. How much money will be available for State aid, which neighborhood needs a school, health clinic or bus line, even where to open a new supermarket – these decisions are based on information that comes from the Census.

Unfortunately, thousands of our people in New York City were not counted in the last census. That means we were passed over for millions of dollars in State and Federal resources. Our communities lost out.

The Census will be mailing Census 2010 questionnaires to every residence in the country in February and March. The "Census 2010" questionnaire has only 10 questions and takes about 10 minutes to fill out. When you receive it, please be sure to fill it out and return it promptly. Don't worry - your privacy will be protected. It doesn't matter if you have someone living with you the landlord doesn't know about, or if they're not a citizen - the Census is prevented by law from sharing the information you provide.

My office is working with neighborhood leaders – churches, schools and businesses – to make sure everyone understand how important it is to be counted in the upcoming 2010 Census. You can make sure our community get its fair share. Let your neighbors know that returning the Census form is easy, safe and important for our future. And of course, if you have any questions about the Census or need help with the questionnaire, or any other matter, please contact my office at (212) 490-9535.

Heat Season Rules:

The City Housing Maintenance Code and Multiple Dwelling Law requires building owners to provide heat and hot water to all tenants. Building owners are required to provide hot water 365 days per year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Between October 1st and May 31st, a period designated as "Heat Season," building owners are also required to provide tenants with heat under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6AM and 10PM, if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between the hours of 10PM and 6AM, if the temperature outside falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Tenants who are cold in their apartments should first attempt to notify the building owner, managing agent or superintendent. If heat is not restored, the tenant should call the City's Citizen Service Center at 311. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (212) 504-4115. The Center is open 24-hours a day, seven-days a week.

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

Ethics Reform

In January both the Governor and the Legislature introduced competing ethics reform packages, and the Senate and Assembly later passed their bills, which Governor Paterson has since vetoed. While the inability for all sides to come to an agreement on how best to reach ethics reform was disappointing, I am hopeful that at least all parties' acknowledging the need to address reform may finally result in positive change.

I have been an advocate for ethics reform since the day I first campaigned for Senate. I know our government can and should be held to higher standards. And I voted for the ethics reform bill because I could not reject the clear incremental improvements over existing law contained in the legislation.

The bill was also largely supported by Good Government groups including the League of Women Voters, NYPIRG and Citizens Union.

Some key aspects of the bill included:

- Restoration of an independent State commission on lobbying and an expanded definition of lobbying;
- Creation of an independent executive ethics and compliance commission;
- Full public access to legislative financial disclosure filings;
- Creation of an Legislative Office of Ethics Investigation empowered to investigate ethics complaints brought by the public or other government entities;
- New enforcement powers for the Board of Elections in investigations of violations of campaign finance laws; and
- New substantial penalties for candidates and committees found to violate those laws.

Given how long I have been fighting for ethics reform, I simply cannot see the value in sacrificing these real improvements because the legislation did not go as far as I would like. The bill reflected a “down payment” on the ethics reform which New Yorker’s truly deserve. In spite of the Governor’s veto, we must now continue our progress and pass legislation which will limit lobbyist contributions, reform campaign finance rules, revoke the pensions of elected officials convicted of crimes while in office, and restrict how campaign funds can be spent.

I carry a number of additional bills that the Governor indicated he wanted to see as part of the reform package, and I will be working to convince my colleagues in both houses of the legislature that these reforms should be adopted, particularly since the Governor already supports them and therefore would not be expected to veto them. The bills I sponsor are:

- S743, which would strengthen laws to ensure that campaign funds not be used for personal expenses;
- S744, which requires disclosure of business relationships between lobbyists and public officials and dramatically lowers the campaign contribution limits for lobbyists; and
- S1733, which prohibits public officials convicted of crimes connected to their office from receiving State pension benefits.

The reforms the Senate and Assembly passed and the Governor vetoed must not be not the end of the road. I will continue to push for the adoption of a comprehensive ethics reform package, as well as for meaningful campaign finance reform which is another critical piece of the effort to ensure a government which is responsive to the electorate.

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