



## NEWS FROM NEW YORK STATE SENATOR **JAMES SKOUFIS**

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**\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\***

### **Skoufis Touts Hudson Valley Wins in Senate's Budget Plan**

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) lauded numerous provisions spelled out in the State Senate's one-house budget, released Sunday, which would directly impact local communities. From historic levels of school funding and much-needed tax relief for middle-class families to parkland improvements and immediate relief for struggling community pharmacies, Skoufis championed a number of the Senate plan's highlights. The Senate one-house budget lays out the chamber's priorities as they, the Assembly, and the Governor engage in final budget negotiations over the next two weeks.

"For the first time in some years, we can confidently say New York is on sound financial footing, and I'm doing everything in my power to ensure the local communities I represent get their fair share of the pie heading into final budget negotiations," said **Senator Skoufis**. "I will continue to fight for the resources our district needs and deserves in the coming weeks and look forward to sharing additional welcome news when a balanced budget is finalized by April 1."

Major highlights of the Senate's budget plan include:

- **Accelerating middle-class income tax cuts.** The Senate plan seeks to accelerate middle-class income tax cuts originally planned for 2025 to 2023, keeping more money in Hudson Valley residents' pockets.
- **\$2.2 billion in new property tax relief.** In addition to last year's \$400 million property tax relief program that middle-class homeowners can claim on their state taxes, the Senate proposes a new initiative that will send significant rebates to New York homeowners starting later this year.
- **Historic levels of school funding.** Under the Senate's plan, schools within Skoufis' Senate District would receive \$835,848,482 in total school aid, including an increase of 18.1% in foundation aid, the complex formula that determines state funding for our schools. The plan

also puts forth \$27 million for library operating aid and \$20 million for new transportation grants. Skoufis continues to fight for full and equitable school funding to ensure all Hudson Valley students receive a strong public education.

- **Universal pre-k expansion.** After securing funding for 1,000 first-ever pre-k seats in his Senate District last year, Skoufis is fighting for expansion of pre-kindergarten programming locally. The Senate's plan reflects a \$250 million increase for pre-k expansion this year, with a full and truly "universal" phase-in over the next two years.
- **\$20 million in tax certiorari aid for the North Rockland Central School District and other communities suffering from major assessment losses.** After securing \$5 million in special tax certiorari aid in the final budget last year - \$1 million of which went to North Rockland - the Senate plan proposes a significant increase to assist North Rockland in order to ease the district's Mirant debt crisis and associated tax burden.
- **New support for over-burdened utility consumers.** The Senate's plan proposes \$400 million in new relief for residents who are facing financial hardship from the recent energy surge that has caused utility bills to skyrocket. Additionally, Skoufis, as chairman of the Senate's investigations committee, recently announced an investigation into utilities, power suppliers, and the state over the unsustainable bills.
- **Gas tax holiday.** In light of skyrocketing global fuel prices, the Senate's plan includes a proposal from Skoufis to create a gas tax holiday from May 1 - December 31 of this year which will translate to immediate, much-needed savings at the pump.
- **Critical small business support.** The Senate's plan extends proposed small business tax cuts to those who pay under the corporate franchise tax, and creates a \$250 million tax credit for any COVID-related expenses incurred by small businesses.
- **Increased funding for local infrastructure.** The Senate's plan recommends an additional \$250 million in Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) funding over last year and adds \$50M for the Extreme Winter Recovery program statewide; both programs provide direct funding to rehabilitate local roads and bridges. The DOT's \$32.8 billion, five-year capital plan will advance critical projects throughout the state, including the Route 17 to I-86 conversion in Orange County.
- **Major investments in child care and home care.** The Senate's plan would fund \$10.3 billion over the next three years to bolster access and affordability of childcare for tens of thousands of families. The plan also commits a historic increase to improve pay for in-home care providers serving the disabled, injured, and elderly across New York State.
- **State parks improvements.** At Skoufis' urging, the Senate's plan adds another \$50 million to the state parks capital budget, bringing the total to \$250 million. This addition will lead to key investments in Harriman State Park, including jump-starting work to reopen Sebago Beach, as well as provide critical funding to the proposed Fjord Trail that will connect the Cold Spring and Beacon train stations.
- **Eliminating the local FIT 'chargeback.'** Skoufis led the charge in recent months to call for the state to reimburse suburban counties - and their taxpayers - that currently foot 1/3 of the bill whenever a local resident attends the Fashion Institute of Technology. The change, valued at \$11 million, will address this long-standing inequity that has disproportionately impacted suburban taxpayers for many years.
- **"Fee-for-Service" pharmacy provision.** After unanimous approval in the Senate, Skoufis' proposal to save mom and pop pharmacies has been prioritized in budget discussions.

Skoufis also succeeded in securing a commitment within the one-house budget proposal to require a **comprehensive and independent audit of all economic development incentives, tax credits, and taxpayer-funded subsidies** distributed by the state. In recent years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been annually rubber-stamped for so-called economic development initiatives without so much as a basic accounting of return on investment. Skoufis has long advocated for greater scrutiny of subsidies and the agencies that distribute them.

The Senate is expected to formally vote to adopt the one-house budget this Monday, March 14. In coming weeks, additional negotiations will take place before a final budget is adopted by April 1.

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