

A Message From ASSEMBLYMEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN



ASSEMBLY MEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN COMMUNITY BOARD 6 REPORT, APRIL 2021

After hard-fought negotiations, we have a budget. I am proud to report that we won funding and legislative victories in a number of areas, including a increase in the personal income tax rate for millionaires, a tax hike on corporations, increased funding for K-12 schools to comply with the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, funding for electric vehicle charging stations, funding for college students with disabilities, and unemployment benefits for workers excluded from traditional unemployment insurance. The message is clear: when we fight, we win!

Below you can read more about highlights of the 2021-2022 Budget, and the areas where we need to keep fighting.

Harvey

Budget Highlights

Economic Justice

The Legislature stood firm in its conviction to raise taxes on the ultra-wealthy and we won 4.3 billion through tax increases starting at 9.65 percent on those with incomes of over 1 million (for single filers; the new tax rate kicks in at 2 million for those filing jointly). Incomes over 5 million would be taxed at a rate of 10.3 percent and incomes of 25 million would be taxed at 10.9. The rates are set to expire in 2027.

Corporations will also pay more in taxes, up from 6.5 percent to 7.25 percent through 2023. Businesses with revenues below 5 million annually would not be affected by the increase.

We won these increases thanks to the work of dedicated organizers, who made sure that the members of the legislature knew taxing the wealthiest was a priority and a necessity to ensure a just recovery. Polls repeatedly showed the popularity of higher taxes on the wealthy, and I am proud to say we followed through on the mandate the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers gave us. In combination with federal aid, the additional revenue generated by the tax increases on millionaires and corporations will set us on a course for economic recovery.

Housing

The pandemic worsened already deep economic inequalities across our state. Renters were hit particularly hard, and are still experiencing difficulties paying their rent. I am pleased that the Legislature stood up for tenants and delivered a sweeping program, the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program (CERAP), which will distribute over 2 billion of federal funds to help qualifying tenants pay back rent. In addition, the assistance will be available to cover up to 3 months of future rent.

The program imposes strong protections for tenants as a condition for their landlords accepting funds through the program, including prohibiting a landlord from raising rents for one year, most types of evictions (except in nuisance cases), and collecting late fees. Ppp looks

The program will be administered by the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA). As soon as information about the newly created program is available online, I will provide an email update.

Please contact my office if you need assistance applying by calling 212-979-9696 or emailing help.district74@gmail.com.

Education

The enacted budget provides a \$1.4 billion increase in Foundation Aid and a three-year Foundation Aid phase-in that will finally fulfill the State's commitments under the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. This is a major victory for the New York's public school students and families.

Additionally, we won an \$105 million expansion of full-day prekindergarten to provide pre-K funding to 210 districts who don't currently receive state-funded full-day Pre-K.

We also fought back against the Governor's proposed \$200 tuition hikes at CUNY and SUNY and won: the budget prevents continuing tuition increases at SUNY and CUNY by putting in place a three-year freeze.

We increased the maximum award under the Tuition Assistance Program by \$500 to assist the neediest students in the State, the largest growth in the program in 20 year, and committed to eliminate the TAP Gap in four years, providing millions of additional recurring operating aid to SUNY and CUNY on top of restoring \$72 million in operating aid cuts to SUNY and CUNY.

People with Disabilities

I am proud to report our historic victory securing 2 million in funding for college students with disabilities. Every budget cycle I have been a part of as an Assemblymember, I have rallied with CUNY students with disabilities to include additional funding in the budget to help college students with disabilities.

This year, our resolution in support of students with disabilities achieved a record 60 cosponsors. We translated that support in the chamber to 2 million dollars for additional supports for students with disabilities. It's been over 25 years since the state put money towards these students' needs. During that time, more students with disabilities have entered higher education. I am proud we won this victory for students with disabilities and I am grateful to the students we worked closely with to achieve this monumental funding.

Environment

The approved spending plan invests \$1.84 billion in funding for the environment. This includes \$500 million for clean water infrastructure and \$300 million for the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF).

We authorized the \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act of 2021, "Restore Mother Nature," to fund environmental improvements that preserve, enhance, and restore New York's natural resources and reduce the impact of climate change. The Bond Act will appear on the ballot in the 2022 general election.

We also expanded the Climate Smart Community Projects program to incentivize the creation of more publicly available fast chargers so electric vehicle adoption becomes more viable. I'm proud to have fought for this expansion and will continue fighting to increase truly publicly available fast charging infrastructure throughout the state.

Small Business Relief

In late summer of 2020, after a series of Assembly-led hearings on the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses, I along with Senator Hoylman introduced legislation, known as the Save our Storefronts (SOS) Act (A3190 / S3349), to direct a minimum of \$500 million in expected federal aid to small businesses and small nonprofits. The legislation was reintroduced in January of 2021, and a

campaign to include the direct relief provided in the SOS Act in the state budget ramped up after the Governor's executive budget did not include adequate relief for storefronts.

We won our campaign: the enacted budget includes 1 billion in direct recovery grants and tax credits to the small business sector. We allocated 800 million for grant payments to small businesses impacted by COVID-19. An additional 40 million was earmarked for nonprofit arts and cultural institutions who need assistance.

This is a historic victory for the storefronts and local cultural institutions that make up the fabric of New York. For over a year now, necessary government mandated closures and restrictions have devastated these vital establishments. Now, our hard fought campaign is declaring victory. With 1 billion in aid set to flow to these businesses, the sector can start to rebuild. When small businesses are thriving, our state is thriving. I look forward to working with advocates and my colleagues in government to ensure this aid is quickly and equitably disbursed,

Legislative Victories

We also won some major victories outside of the context of the budget including the legalization of marijuana and the end to solitary confinement as we know it in New York's prison. My legislation to ensure epilepsy patients are informed of certain health complications that can arise from the disease also passed the Assembly and is on its way to passing in the Senate. Read more about these victories below.

Marijuana Legalization

We legalized marijuana in the state of New York last month. I'm grateful for the tireless work of the advocates who pushed us over the finish line, and I'm proud of the legislature for sticking to its principles and not caving to the Governor's play to control all the revenue from the sale of adult use marijuana. Instead, we were able to deliver a bill that truly invests in the communities harmed by the racist war on drugs, generates revenue for schools and drug prevention programs, and protects children.

Ending Solitary Confinement in New York's Prisons

Solitary confinement in excess of 15 days has officially been abolished in New York's prisons. The HALT Solitary Confinement Act, subject to limited exceptions, prohibits the placement of an incarcerated person in segregated confinement for more than 15 days or 20 out of 60 days unless specific crimes are committed while in confinement. It would also provide for mental health screenings and a heightened level of care for prisoners placed in segregated confinement.

Studies have consistently found that subjecting people to segregated confinement for 22 to 24 hours a day without meaningful human contact, programming or therapy can cause deep and permanent

psychological, physical, developmental and social harm, and that people placed in solitary confinement thereafter may have a more difficult time complying with prison rules. Despite these proven harms, at any given time there are approximately 3,000 people in New York State prisons in segregated confinement, some for months, years and even decades.

The eradication of this inhumane policy is a step toward improving our correctional system. I want to once again thank the organizers behind HALT Solitary for their heroic efforts in pushing this life-saving legislation across the finish line.

Informing Epilepsy Patients on Ways to Stay Safe



**ASSEMBLY MEMBER
HARVEY EPSTEIN**



A-3298 PASSES!

This bill requires health professionals to provide patients with information regarding sudden unexpected death in epilepsy.

Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP) is responsible for the deaths of about 3,000 Americans every year. Sadly, this condition took the life of one of my constituents. In partnership with the family and Senator Brad Hoylman, I introduced legislation to require epileptic patients be informed by their doctors about the existence of this condition so that preventative steps can be taken to save lives.

I'm happy to report that the bill passed the Assembly unanimously. I look forward to the bill passing in the Senate and the Governor signing the bill into law.

Honoring Women of Distinction



Congratulations to Mary Cannon, Molly Hollister, Tiffany Townsend for their contributions to our community.

Feel free to contact Assembly Member Harvey Epstein's office with any questions or concerns.

Our office is located at

107 Avenue B (store front)

You can email us at epsteinh@nyassembly.gov or call us at 212-979-9696