



Legislative Update

from Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee

WINTER 2014

Dear Neighbors,

Thank you for electing me to serve another term as your Assemblymember.

I am truly grateful for the confidence you have placed in me to respond to the challenges affecting all of us in the 97th Assembly District.

We must focus on the issues essential to the economic wellbeing and quality of life of every individual and family throughout Rockland County and New York State.

As I return to Albany for the 2015 legislative session my priorities include:

- Eliminating the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) and fully restoring aid to our public schools
- Implementing full Universal Pre-K by supporting existing facilities and helping to create much-needed space
- Introducing, as soon as possible, the strong oversight legislation recommended by Fiscal Monitor, Hank Greenberg, in his investigation report on the East Ramapo School District
- Fighting to ensure Tappan Zee Bridge costs will be spread across the entire NYS Thruway system providing the necessary funding for a piece of infrastructure that is vital to the prosperity of all New Yorkers without placing an excessive burden on those of us in Rockland

I welcome your input and will convey your thoughts, suggestions and concerns to state leaders.

Working together we can continue to make a positive difference.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2015,

Ellen C. Jaffee
NYS Assemblymember, 97th District

Jaffee applauds Rockland Water Coalition, PSC Decision to Shelve United Water Desal Plant

I am proud to have worked with the Rockland Water Coalition, which has been so effective at rallying the Rockland community to challenge the construction of a costly, energy-intensive desalination plant. Their efforts have indeed paid off.

At a time when Rockland’s demand for water has actually decreased, the PSC not only shelved the proposed United Water New York plant, but also ruled, at least for now, against the company’s request to pass along what the company claims are \$60 million in pre-construction costs for its pilot plant onto the backs of hardworking ratepayers, in the form of a rate surcharge.

George Potanovic, a co-founder of the Rockland Water Coalition said, “The Rockland Water Coalition recognizes NYS Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee’s history of unwavering support for both the environmental protection of Rockland County’s existing water resources and the need for New York State and the PSC to enact more economically sustainable “best management” water policies and practices for our water resources in the future.”

At the same time, Rockland County leadership established the Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management, whose mission is to develop a long-term, safe, sustainable, and far less expensive water supply.

Jaffee speaks out on East Ramapo Fiscal Monitor’s report

After years of meetings, conversations and requests from Assemblymember Jaffee for state intervention in the troubled district, the State Education Department appointed attorney Hank Greenberg as the fiscal monitor, a move the Governor supported. This was welcome news to the many concerned parents, teachers and students who have been working with Jaffee for so long to restore the high-quality education the students of East Ramapo deserve and that the New York State Constitution guarantees them. In response to the Greenberg report released in November, Jaffee issued the following statement:

“Hank Greenberg correctly recognized, after a five-month review, that the district’s problems are not entirely fiscal. I wholeheartedly support his recommendation to appoint a fiscal monitor who will have the statutory power to oversee fiscal management, expenditures of funds, and to override both Superintendent and School Board decisions. I am working with my colleagues Assemblymember Ken Zebrowski and Senator David Carlucci as well as the State Education Department to prepare the necessary legislation with strong oversight, which we will introduce without delay. The state must provide additional funds to restore the tremendous cuts to programs and staff within the public schools. In addition, capital funds should be allocated to correct the serious structural issues in the public school buildings. The quality of East Ramapo public schools must be restored.”



East Ramapo school district students from the EELEF After School Center thank Assemblymember Jaffee for supporting the Rockland Youth Film Festival. Story on page 3.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ELLEN JAFFEE

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Governor Signs Jaffee Bills into Law

Protecting farmland in suburban communities

Jaffee's bill (A8026/S6360) Chap. 463, An Act to Amend the Agriculture and Markets Law, in Relation to Agricultural Districts, sponsored in the Senate by David Valesky (D-Oneida) reduces the current required acreage to form an Agricultural District from 500 to 250 acres. Reducing the minimum acreage in creating Agricultural Districts is critical to preserving and restoring farmland and reviving the farming traditions of Rockland as well as creating additional Agricultural Districts.

"I am thrilled the Governor has signed this legislation into law," said Jaffee, Chair of the Assembly Taskforce on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy. "Protecting farmland in suburban communities increases property values, sprouts new businesses, creates jobs and educational opportunities, preserves open space and the environment, while providing a supply stream of locally grown produce to the community and improving the health and quality of life for all."

The law takes effect in January 2015

"The suburban farming bill Ellen Jaffee has successfully brought through the legislature is nothing short of revolutionary. It offers the best kind of support to those trying to bring food production back to the suburbs."

- Joan Gussow, Food Policy Expert

Providing due process protections to adults with developmental disabilities

The new law (A09729/S07374) Chap. 405, an Act to Amend the Mental Hygiene Law, in relation to Transitional Care, sponsored in the Senate by John Bonacic (R-Middletown) allows out-of-state developmentally-disabled adults to be given the same due process protections as those in-state by providing the parent(s) or guardians due process protections, including the right to an impartial hearing to challenge the determination regarding the appropriate setting for that individual.

The law is now in effect.



Assemblymember Jaffee at Rockland Home for the Aged Holiday Party with Robert Rivera (left), Most Cooperative Resident, Esther Gitlow Towers and Richard Palumbo, Most Cooperative Resident, Yvette and Louis Tekel Senior Residence

Jaffee co-sponsors bill to create the State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate

The bill (A06239/S04550) would create the State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate to represent residential utility consumers' interest in residential utility matters at the state and federal level.

In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee, consumers in New York have been left without a voice and real representation when it comes to utility services. Currently, more than 40 states and the District of Columbia have an



Assemblymember Jaffee with Rockland County's Senior Citizen of the Year, Bella Shore (center), and June Molof, Director of the Rockland County Office for the Aging.

Support for Seniors in the 2014-15 State Budget

- EPIC expanded: \$4.1 million for the expansion of the eligibility for the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Program (EPIC)
- Community Services for the Elderly funded: \$5 million in additional funding to eligible local Offices for the Aging

Jaffee co-sponsors bill to raise the age of adult criminal responsibility

The bill (A03668/S01409) would raise the age of adult criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 years of age, so that youth who are charged with a crime may be treated in an age-appropriate manner and not imprisoned with adults.

Several studies have shown that treating minors as adults is often counter-productive in rehabilitating the youth and ineffective in preventing future criminal acts. This bill would authorize juvenile detention centers and facilities maintained by the Office of Children and Family Services to maintain custody of youths under age eighteen. In addition, this bill will allow add 16- and 17-year-olds who are charged with serious crimes, now tried as adults, to be subjected to prosecution as juvenile offenders in adult court, with the option to be waived down, in appropriate circumstances, by court order to Family Court.

New York is one of only two states to mandate that all youth aged 16 and 17, charged with any offense, be prosecuted and sentenced in adult criminal court. While other states have reconsidered this issue in light of new evidence on child development and cognitive thinking, New York's law has remained unchanged for decades.

Jaffee co-sponsors bill to establish Safe Patient Handling Policy

The bill (A02180/S01123) would establish a statewide safe patient handling system in hospitals and nursing homes. Without Safe Patient Handling legislation, the demand for nursing homes may exceed the supply by nearly 30% over the next five years. Patients benefit through improved quality of care and quality of life by reducing the risk of falls, being dropped, friction burns, skin tears and bruises. Caregivers benefit from the reduced risk of debilitating injuries that may lead to increased morale, improved job satisfaction and longevity in their profession. In addition, health care facilities would benefit through reduced lost work days and improved recruitment and retention of caregivers.

This bill did not pass the Senate.

independent state agency that represents the interests of residential utility customers, regarding rates and present conditions of public service utilities. New York is one of the few states, and by far the largest, without an independent office. The Utility Consumer Advocate would be appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate confirmation, and would serve a term of six years.

The bill passed the Assembly.



Assemblymember Jaffee at West Street Child Care Learning Center in Spring Valley.

Jaffee holds roundtable on unaccompanied youth in Rockland

After attending the NY State Assembly Committee hearing in September on *New York State's Role in Addressing the Influx of Migrant Youth from Central American Countries*, Assemblymember Jaffee invited experts and advocates from a variety of organizations serving unaccompanied minors/youth to participate in a local roundtable where participants would be able to learn more about unaccompanied minors/youth in Rockland County and to develop and create programs that might strengthen existing partnerships and collaborations. The roundtable was also an opportunity to effectively identify these minors/youth and to respond to legal, social services, mental health, educational, family and community needs.

It is estimated that after being detained at the Southwestern Border of the United States, approximately 204* unaccompanied minors/youth have been placed in Rockland County between January 1, 2014 and September 2014. These children come primarily from Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

*Source: Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement



Assemblymember Jaffee with Nyack Mayor, Jen Laird White (center), and Marie Lorenzini, Nyack Village Trustee at Nyack Hospital October Breast Cancer Awareness Month event. Photo credit: Studio Eleven Productions.

Boosting Rockland's Economy and Creating Jobs

Thanks to the efforts of the Rockland Economic Development Corporation and its partners in government and the private sector, Rockland will soon be home to two new Data Centers, including Bloomberg LP in Orangeburg. Rockland will become a data storage hot spot with a total of five such facilities. Par Pharmaceuticals is relocating its corporate headquarters and more research staff to its property in Chestnut Ridge. These two projects will bring 285 new high-paying jobs to our community. Assemblymember Jaffee is working with business and government leaders to ensure that the Pfizer and Novartis properties are filled with new companies as soon as possible. If you are thinking of bringing or expanding your business in Rockland County, please contact the REDC at mditullo@redc.org or by calling 845-735-7040.



Assemblymember Jaffee honoring Rev. Dr. Louis E. Sanders, Pastor AME Zion Church (right), at the Alpha Phi Alpha Recognition Dinner with Corey Turner, Eta Chi Lambda Chapter President, Legislator Toney Earl (left) and Lesly St-Louis, chapter member.

Ellen Jaffee Advocates for the Arts

Jaffee legislation would establish Edward Hopper Citation of Merit for Visual Artists

Assemblymember Jaffee has introduced legislation to establish The Edward Hopper Citation of Merit for Visual Artists. When the bill is passed, the Governor will present the award every two years to a distinguished visual artist who is making significant contributions to the advancement of the arts in New York state.

The artist will be considered the State Visual Artist and will be awarded an honorarium of \$10,000. The artist will also give two public showings within the state, one at The Edward Hopper House Art Center in Nyack.

"Hopper's enormous contribution to art and the course of art history, not just here in America but around the world has made the Hopper House a cultural hub for the Rockland County community and a tourist destination bringing visitors and boosting the local economy," Jaffee said.

Carole Perry, Edward Hopper House Art Center Executive Artistic Director, said "Edward Hopper has had a profound influence on succeeding generations of artists, and so it is fitting to recognize his contribution to the arts in New York State by attaching his name to an award that honors and encourages today's artists."

East Ramapo students launch first annual Rockland Youth Film Festival

Speaking at the first annual Rockland Youth Film Festival that showcased the talents of young film makers in Rockland and abroad in November, Assemblymember Jaffee said, "We are all well aware that because of budget cuts in East Ramapo arts programs have been cut from the school curriculum. We have been working to get those programs restored but what began as a seed—a grant to build a media room where these students from East Ramapo could make movies and commercials and learn about the equipment and the film making process—blossomed into the Rockland Youth Film Festival. Supporting programs like this helps young people find direction and gives them a creative outlet. These students had a dream, and they mustered the determination and did the hard work to make that dream—putting on their own film festival—come true. Just think about the invaluable lessons that they will carry with them throughout their lives. They were responsible for the graphic design, community outreach, video cataloging, judging, and the presentation of the festival. They've gained lessons in maturity and professionalism. They have brought us here and this community together. They are an example and an inspiration to us all."

Capital Projects Nominations

Funds for the capital projects were included in the 2014-15 state budget and may be used for various purposes including improvements to municipal facilities, economic development, education, cultural, recreational, housing and community development. Upon review by all of the determining and administering agencies, the name and purpose of each grant awarded will be posted on the NY State Assembly website.

- \$500,000.00 for the Town of Orangetown for construction of the new Oak Tree Road Bridge Project, which will help remediate flooding and keep drivers safe. The funds will also help reduce the cost for local taxpayers to replace the bridge.
- \$250,000.00 for the West Street Child Care Learning Center, Inc. in Spring Valley to expand present building facilities to include six classrooms that will provide quality early childhood services to an additional 70 children, ages 18 mos-5 yrs, as well as a multi-purpose room for indoor gross motor activities.
- \$250,000.00 for the Village of Suffern to construct a 20' wide (minimum) Emergency Overpass on the New Jersey Transit (NJT) Right of Way from Orange Avenue with access to Ramapo Avenue. During severe weather, the new overpass will provide necessary emergency services to flood-prone areas in the West Ward.
- \$125,000.00 for the Village of Nyack to make critically-needed renovations to the Nyack Senior Center, a village- owned property. These renovations will include a new roof, window and door replacements; bringing the kitchen up to code; ceiling replacement, and the installation of a backup electric generator. These upgrades will enable the village to adequately serve its senior population and when necessary to use the building as an ADA accessible emergency shelter.
- \$125,000.00 for the Good Samaritan Hospital to purchase telemetry units (transmitters, equipment, monitors, and software.) This capital is needed as a vital component of the hospital's patient care for series cardiac dysrhythmias, heart failure, internal bleeding issues, strokes, and other life-threatening conditions that require constant monitoring.
- \$125,000.00 for the Elmwood Community Playhouse, Inc. in Nyack to renovate its performance space to support its mission of providing the community with high-quality, affordable theater and its members an artistic outlet year-round. Renovations will include a "Loop" sound system for the hearing-impaired, a handicap-accessible elevator, and a 615 sq. ft. expansion for greater comfort of patrons.
- \$125,000.00 for the Finkelstein Memorial Library to renovate the Holocaust Museum and Study Center and to build a quality Universal pre-Kindergarten in Spring Valley. They will build a second classroom in a newly renovated ADA compliant building. In addition to the current community services offered including homework help, ESOL classes, and varied programming for adults, this new space will support enrichment classes such as music, world language, and tutoring classes.



Civic and education leaders gathered with Assemblymember Jaffee in Memorial Park to announce that Nyack has been selected to participate in the Toni Morrison Society's Bench by the Road project. On May 18, 2015, a memorial bench will be installed in Nyack to commemorate Underground Railroad conductor and entrepreneur Cynthia Hesdra. Left to right: Assemblymember Jaffee, Willie Trotman, Frances Pratt, Kim Cross, Nancy Blaker Weber, Jane Marino, Bill Batson, Lakeba Johnson. Photo credit: Ray Wright



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Boosting food donation, cutting food waste

Assemblymember Jaffee, Chair of the Task Force on Food, Farm, and Nutrition Policy, attended two roundtable discussions on reducing food waste in New York State in November. "Americans waste food at an alarming rate, sending far too much to our overburdened landfills while millions of people go hungry," she said. "All of this waste also adds to the constant damage we inflict upon our air, soil, and water. These two roundtables were a valuable opportunity to craft solutions to this problem. Together, with environmental and food security advocates, we can develop tactics that we can implement in New York State."

Did you know?

- In 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that Americans generated almost 35 million tons of food waste. 95% ended up in landfills or incinerators. Food waste is the most prevalent material reaching landfills.
- The National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) found that Americans trash 40% of our food supply every year, valued at \$165 billion. The average American family of four ends up throwing away an equivalent of up to \$2,275 annually in food.
- The NRDC discovered that a 15% reduction in losses of the US food supply would save enough food to feed 25 million Americans annually.