

Assemblyman

Fred W. Thiele, Jr.**Reports to the People**

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted nearly every aspect of daily life as we know it and the normal working operations of this year's legislative session was no exception. Although my regular weekly trips to personally attend Session in Albany may have ended sooner than scheduled this year, my work as your State Assembly representative has remained constant as I continue to fulfill my legislative duties and serve my constituency in district.

My office has responded to thousands of letters, e-mails and phone calls regarding the COVID-19 pandemic that included: health and safety issues; help for small businesses; unemployment assistance; guidance for essential services; the Governor's Executive Orders; election procedures, and reopening guidelines. I joined with state, federal and county government representatives from the Long Island region on a daily conference call with the Governor's office to receive updates and relay important feedback on the impact of COVID-19 on our communities. Weekly ZOOM briefings with the East End Supervisors and Mayors Association provided an excellent opportunity to be kept apprised of ongoing local efforts to gain more testing sites, personal protective equipment and other necessary resources for each municipality.

On March 30, 2020, the Assembly adopted a resolution providing for special temporary procedures during a declared state of emergency to preserve the integrity of the legislative process during the COVID-19 outbreak. This enabled the Legislature to safely proceed with the legislative process and subsequently hold public hearings, adopt the 2020-21 State Budget, pass legislation and officially wrap up the 2020 Legislative Session.

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**Tuckahoe School District**

The original Executive Order that closed every school district in the State was issued by the Governor on March 16, 2020 (#202.4). Keeping in mind that some students get their best source of nutrition during the school day, it was essential that our South Fork area school districts provided services to meet the needs of those families that rely on the free and reduced-price meal program to feed their children. On Thursday March 19, 2020, I joined with Tuckahoe CSD Superintendent Leonard Skuggevik, school nurse Wendy J. Meyer, RN, and other members of the Tuckahoe CSD community to deliver breakfasts and lunches to students.

2020 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 RELATED LEGISLATION

Guaranteed LOSAP Credits for Volunteer Firefighter and Ambulance Workers (Chapter #113 of The Laws of 2020)

Legislation that I sponsored with Senator Todd Kaminsky (A.10438A/S.8215B) has been signed into law to authorize length of service award program (LOSAP) sponsors to make adjustments to certain point systems used to calculate credits for volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers during the COVID-19 state disaster emergency. This will ensure that these dedicated volunteers rightfully receive adequate point credits despite COVID-19 related restrictions placed on personnel response and training opportunities.

Increased Financial and Budgetary Flexibility for Local Governments

As Chair of the Assembly Local Governments Committee, I introduced legislation at the request of the New York State Comptroller to address the increased fiscal burden municipalities across the State are facing as they continue to operate and provide critical services during the COVID-19 pandemic, A.10492 (same as S.8417 by Senator Liz Krueger). If signed into law by the Governor, my legislation will provide much needed financial and budgetary flexibility to local governments during the pandemic and its aftermath by extending the rollover period for bond anticipation notes, authorizing local governments and school districts to utilize reserved funds for COVID-19 expenses and extending the repayment time frame of inter-fund loan advances made for COVID-19 expenses.

2020 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 RELATED LEGISLATION

Help for Small Businesses

The Assembly Small Business Committee held a series of virtual public hearings to discuss the current and future economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on small businesses, including the agriculture industry, across New York State. I co-chaired two of these hearings and had the opportunity to interview local participants who shared testimony on this important topic including: Kevin O'Connor, President and CEO of Bridgehampton National Bank, who was instrumental in personally helping many local small businesses successfully navigate and get funding from the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) program; Bonnie Brady, Executive Director of the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association and representatives from the Long Island Farm Bureau and the Long Island Wine Council.

Emergency Homeownership Stability Program

I sponsor legislation, under the review of the Assembly Housing Committee, to establish the COVID-19 Emergency Homeownership Stability Program to bring long-term relief, in the form of a tax credit, to those whose ability to pay their mortgage has been diminished or eliminated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, A.10478/S.8443. I will continue to work with the Housing Committee and the Senate sponsor, Senator James Gaughran, in the off-Session to strengthen the language by getting feedback from non-profit organizations that promote and protect affordable homeownership and have successfully administered programs providing one-time relief to homeowners at risk of losing their homes to foreclosure.

Study on the Health Impacts of Covid-19 on Minority Communities (Chapter #99 of the Laws of 2020)

Enacted legislation that I helped pass will require the Department of Health to conduct a study on the health impacts of COVID-19 on minorities in New York State (A.10517, Aubry/S.8245A Parker). It builds on a virtual joint public hearing on this topic that I co-chaired May 18, 2020. Minerva Perez, Executive Director of OLA of Eastern Long Island and Lance Gumbs, Vice Chairman of the Shinnecock Indian Nation Council of Tribal Trustees were among the many who testified and offered beneficial recommendations on how to approach and mitigate the disproportionate adverse impacts of COVID-19 on minority communities.





County Officials
I was joined by my Senate Local Government counterpart, Senator James Gaughran, to discuss budget priorities during a meeting with county officials from around the State on February 12, 2020.



Bridgehampton Childcare Center

I worked with AFTEE (All for the East End) to distribute NYS Clean hand sanitizer, provided by the New York State Assembly, to local food pantries and child care centers on the East End. Pictured with me is Bonnie Michelle Cannon, Executive Director, Bridgehampton Child Care & Recreational Center.

Health Care Professionals Heroes Loan Forgiveness Program

Frontline health care workers have continued to make sacrifices throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, by saving lives and caring for others at the expense of their own health and safety. They have truly exemplified the best among us, and we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for their service during this crisis. It is unacceptable that these heroes are also facing, in many cases, insurmountable student loan debt. I am proud to have introduced legislation with Senator Ken LaValle to establish a Health Care Professional Heroes Loan Forgiveness Program to help rightfully alleviate some of that burden, A.10455/S.8375. This legislation remained pending in the Assembly Higher Education and the Senate Health Committee at the close of the 2020 Legislative Session.

“New York Tough”

New York’s continued success in fighting COVID-19 is dependent upon our own actions. Mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing remain critical to controlling the spread of this deadly virus. Compliance and enforcement are key in winning this war. You may keep track of updates on the state’s progress during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at forward.ny.gov.



Stony Brook Southampton Hospital Flower and Plant Giveaway

My wife, NancyLynn, and I joined Dr. Medhat Allam at a Stony Brook Southampton Hospital Flower and Plant Giveaway for Health Care and First Responders.



BE COUNTED. CENSUS 2020

There's Still Time to be Counted

As we work together to combat COVID-19, it is now more important than ever that we do our part to ensure that every New Yorker is counted. Conducted every 10 years, the Census provides information on every person living in the United States. This information helps with important political, economic and social decisions.

Our state receives \$53 billion in federal funding each year to support our hospitals, public schools, housing, transportation and other vital programs that keep our state moving. Each person not counted costs New York State thousands of dollars in federal aid each year.

The U.S. Census Bureau has extended the response deadline. If you have not already done so, please take a moment and go to my2020census.gov for more information on the Census questionnaire. It can be completed online, by phone or by mail. It's safe, secure and confidential. Your privacy and information are protected.

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Summer 2020



Springs School Students
Prior to the Governor declaring a state-of-emergency, I welcomed the Springs School Diversity Ambassador Program to the Assembly Chamber in Albany. The students traveled to the State Capitol on March 2, 2020 to present their program to top educational leaders at the NYS Council of School Superintendents' Winter Institute.