

Summer 2022



# Assemblyman **Fred W. Thiele, Jr.**



## **Reports to the People**

*Dear Constituent:*

*This year's \$220.5 billion Enacted State Budget invests in critical priorities for Long Island and New York. Tax relief, education, health and the environment are at the top of the list. I am pleased to share some highlights from the State Budget with you that are important to our region and the state.*

*Fred Thiele, Jr.*

Fred W. Thiele, Jr.  
Member of Assembly

## **2022 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Legislative Commission on the Future of the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA)**

LIPA is the only utility in the nation that operates under a third-party management model where it contracts with a private utility company (now PSEG-LI) to manage our region's electric system. For more than 25 years, this model has repeatedly failed us while we pay some of the highest electric rates in the nation. The lack of transparency, oversight and accountability has been demonstrated time and again, most dramatically with the unacceptable storm response during Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and Tropical Storm Isaias in 2020.

I have been committed to reforming LIPA throughout my career. This year, I joined with State Senator James Gaughran to establish the Legislative Commission on the Future of LIPA as part of the State Budget.

The Legislative Commission will investigate and report to the Legislature on the establishment of a public power model for the operation of LIPA. The Commission will evaluate the public power option and compare it with all other reasonable alternatives for the future management of LIPA.

We will seek the option that will best serve the ratepayers of the LIPA service area. This is a unique opportunity to create a new energy future for Long Island after decades of poor storm response, high rates and record debt. As co-chair of the Commission, I will work with my colleagues to help make LIPA more efficient and responsive to its ratepayers. It is also an opportunity to ensure that a new LIPA meets the state's climate goals.

### **Additional LIPA Reforms**

In addition to my work to establish the LIPA Commission, I also sponsored legislation, currently pending the Governor's approval, to hold LIPA's service provider (PSEG-LI) to the same standards as other electric utilities across the state. The first bill, A.2622A, mandates criteria to be included in LIPA's emergency response plan and subjects it to review, approval and enforcement by the State Public Service Commission. The second, A.6428C, makes LIPA responsible for the reimbursement of any spoiled food or medication after a home or a business experiences a power outage lasting 72 consecutive hours or more.



*On April 13, 2022, I stood proudly with local firefighters and fellow elected officials to announce the passage of the EMS Cost Recovery Act in this year's State Budget. This action provides long-needed support for the fire departments that provide emergency services across the state.*



## Fostering Public Participation

The State Budget enacted permanent changes to the State Open Meetings Law, that I co-authored, to permit all state and local public bodies to use videoconferencing to conduct so-called “hybrid” public meetings where the public can participate remotely. These new provisions enhance the public’s ability to access government, while still protecting the public’s right to directly petition their government representatives in person.

## Tax Cuts for Middle Class New Yorkers

The State Budget provided much-needed tax breaks for families, workers and homeowners amidst rising prices and an economy still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Gas Tax Holiday:** New York State suspended a 16 cent per gallon gas tax through December of 2022, a measure that will provide over \$500 million in needed relief for families and businesses across the state.
- **Property Tax Relief:** The budget also created a new homeowner tax rebate credit for more than 2.5 million homeowners. This initiative will provide more than \$2.2 billion in property tax relief.
- **Income Tax Break:** The State Budget accelerated the tax cut phase-in for middle-class New Yorkers to be fully in place by 2023, two years ahead of schedule. This measure is expected to deliver \$1.2 billion in tax relief for New York residents.



*Last year’s U.S. Marine Corps’ Toys for Tots program was a great success. Thank you to all my constituents who donated a toy and helped make children’s dreams come true!*



*Protecting the Peconic Estuary*

## Addressing Climate Issues and Financing Environmental Initiatives

This year’s State Budget included historic commitments to the environment.

Among these measures was the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act. Voters will have the final say this November on a \$4.2 billion plan to preserve New York’s natural resources and reduce the impact of climate change.

The Environmental Protection Fund was increased to \$400 million, the highest funding level in history. Included was \$450,000 to support the efforts of the Peconic Estuary Partnership and strengthen freshwater wetland protections.

### A+ On The Environment

New York State Environmental Advocates released its State Environmental Scorecard for the 2022 State Legislative Session. I was proud to earn a near-perfect score of 98%





*I presented a resolution congratulating the Pierson High School Boys Varsity Basketball Team for winning the Long Island Basketball Class C Championship. Go Whalers!*



*I presented Westhampton Free Library with a proclamation commemorating its 125th anniversary on March 1, 2022. Congratulations!*



*On April 6, 2022, I had the pleasure of welcoming Montauk School's 7th grade class to the State Capitol. We even had a surprise visit from Speaker Heastie in the Assembly Chamber!*

## **Ensuring High Quality Public Education**

The 2022-23 budget provided the highest level of school aid funding in New York State history for a total of \$31.2 billion in general support for public schools, an increase of \$2.1 billion from last year. It also included \$21.3 billion in Foundation Aid, representing an additional \$1.5 billion from last year and guaranteeing a minimum 3% increase to every school district. The budget also ensured access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs with an additional investment of \$125 million for a total of \$1.1 billion in funding. This increase is expected to provide program access to over 17,500 four-year-old children and, in the next three years, increase to ensure universal pre-kindergarten in every school district. Finally, I helped secure a total of \$99.6 million to allow public libraries to continue providing lifelong learning opportunities and indispensable civic services.

## **Strengthening East End Behavioral Health Initiatives**

The South Fork Behavioral Health Initiative and the North Fork Coalition for Behavioral Health received \$175,000 each. These initiatives are a collaborative effort between school districts, Family Service League, Stony Brook Medicine, local governments and other local service agencies to provide increased mental health services in East End public schools.



*I again secured \$500,000 for "last mile" transportation to work in connection with the South Fork Commuter Connection (SFCC). Keeping the SFCC's coordinated rail and bus system is critical to providing East End workers with a viable public transit option.*





*On February 10, 2022, I joined with colleagues and the families of three fallen Troopers for a memorial and bridge dedication ceremony. Last year, we passed legislation to rename area bridges to honor the memory of fallen State Troopers Thomas J. Consorte, Jose A. Rosado, and Donald A. Strand.*

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**Fred W. Thiele, Jr.**  
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