



NEWS From Assemblymember John T. McDonald III

Summer 2025

2025 Post NYS Budget and Legislative Session

Dear Neighbor:

This year the Legislature passed a \$254 billion budget that works toward the goals of affordability, opportunity, and public safety, and I entered my third year as Chair of the NYS Assembly Governmental Operations Committee, a committee that had 638 bills introduced to it. Out of the 90 bills that I sponsored this year, 22 bills passed both houses of the NYS Legislature and will be considered by the Executive by the end of the year. A total of 38 bills that I cosponsored have passed both houses. In addition to my legislative duties and responsibilities, I continue to focus on providing exceptional constituent services and helping people navigate government agencies to get the answers that they need.

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any concerns you may have or assistance that you may need. I believe in public service in the truest sense and that means I am elected to work for you, an honor that I never take for granted.

Thank you for your valuable input on legislation that I sponsor and other bills that came up during the legislative year. As always, I look forward to hearing about the topics that you care about.

Sincerely,

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh

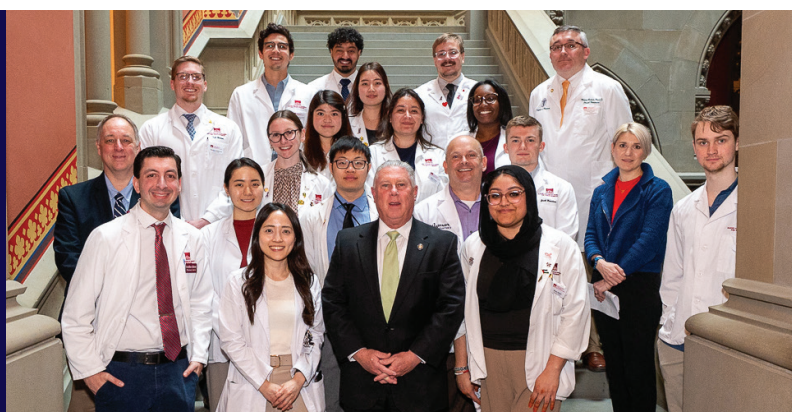
Sgt. Henry Johnson Bridge Renaming Legislation A.8897/S.8440



Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh, Senators Patricia Fahy and Jake Ashby, Assemblymembers Phil Steck, Gabriella Romero, Marylane Shimsky, and Steve Otis, City of Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, representatives from Senator Charles Schumer's office, and Jackie Jones, Gulf War veteran and Commander of North Albany American Legion Post 1610 at the press conference announcing the introduction of the legislation.

Many in our community have fought for recognition of Sgt. Johnson's bravery and heroism throughout the years, resulting in the posthumous awards of the Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, and Distinguished Service Cross. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. once called Sgt. Johnson 'one of the five bravest American soldiers in [WWI].' Despite that accolade, the significance of Henry Johnson's achievements was overlooked during his lifetime. More recently, even though the Bipartisan Naming Commission recommended a name change from Fort Polk to Fort Johnson in 2023, last week, the federal administration switched the name back to Fort Polk with no justification. While we cannot right the wrong of taking the name of Fort Polk from Sgt. Johnson or the many other wrongs that he endured during his lifetime due simply to the color of his skin, we can come together and rename this Capital Region gateway after a man whose bravery and sacrifice should be a model to us all. Senator Patricia Fahy and I have introduced a bill (S.8440/A.8897) that will hopefully be passed and signed into law at the beginning of the 2026 legislative session.

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh and
pharmacy students from various pharmacy schools
attending for an advocacy day.



Highlights of 2025 Legislative Accomplishments

Notable McDonald Bills that Passed Both the Senate and the Assembly (Pending decision by the Executive):

A29 - Designates the state of New York a purple heart state

This bill will designate New York State as a purple heart state, enshrining into law our gratitude for the sacrifices made by wounded veterans.

A2296 - Provides a rebuttable presumption relating to recertification as a minority and women-owned business enterprise

The recertification process for the NYS minority and women-owned business (MWBE) program is at times arbitrary and leads to lengthy and unnecessary delays to recertification for MWBE businesses that have been long established. The delay in recertification has also led to these established MWBE businesses being unofficially in purgatory on whether they are certified or not, which leads to losses in opportunity and business.

This legislation would address some of the more serious concerns with the MWBE process by creating a rebuttable presumption for recertification. This rebuttable presumption will only apply in cases where there has been no material change to the business or change in ownership since the original certification.

A2340A - Prohibits the sale of kratom to individuals under the age of twenty-one

Kratom is an opioid like plant which has a stimulant or opioid-like effect. It is typically sold as tea leaves, powder or pill form for muscle relaxation, to fight fatigue, and as an antidepressant. Despite these many alleged medicinal benefits, the Drug Enforcement Administration lists it as a drug of concern with no medicinal value. Furthermore, the Food and Drug Administration compares kratom to morphine in its risks for use disorders and dependence. Several FDA studies are continuing to evaluate the scientific information on kratom but the agency warns consumers to not use kratom products until it is better evaluated.

This legislation is intended to help keep kratom out of the hands of children and young adults. Under this legislation, anyone who sells kratom to individuals under 21 will face up to a \$500 fine. I worked with the New York National Guard Counterdrug Task Force and the Nopiates Committee in crafting this legislation.

A2496 - Relates to preferred source status for entities that provide employment to certain persons

People with disabilities are overrepresented at all stages of the criminal justice system, from jail and prison to probation and parole. This legislation would help the formerly incarcerated, many of whom suffer from a disability, secure stabilizing employment opportunities. Allowing access to the preferred source program would allow those individuals employment opportunities at reentry. Research and evidence show that effective reentry prevents recidivism which improves public safety overall.

A3273 - Enacts the "New York State Resident Experience Act of 2025"

With millions of residents interacting with the government on a daily basis, it is imperative that state government understand the resident experience to provide quality service and improve confidence in government. Furthermore, resident experience data can help agencies better fulfill their missions and improve the experience within the state workforce. By requiring agencies to collect anonymous feedback from New Yorkers using their programs and services, this bill would put the experience of New Yorkers first, improving program efficiency and service delivery and increasing public trust.

A3415 - Relates to public-facing websites operated by political committees

Campaign finance transparency is a central pillar of any healthy democracy. It is widely recognized that individuals and interest groups commonly seek to influence the policymaking process by sponsoring, either through direct financial contributions or through independent expenditures, the election bids of candidates whose political dispositions align with their own policy objectives. Accordingly, for voters to be able to identify which candidates are most apt to advance their preferences and interests, it is imperative that they have the tools needed to evaluate the credibility of the voluminous political messages they encounter during each election cycle to allow voters to identify the expenditure committee responsible for a specific communication.

In 2018, New York responded to the increasing prevalence of internet-based political communications by updating the Election Law to require that most digital advertisements contain a disclaimer. This bill builds on 2018 reforms by adding websites to the list of political communications that must contain a disclaimer, and by establishing that websites intended to influence an election qualify as independent expenditures.

A7563 - Relates to the removal of actions to certain courts in an adjoining county

Twenty-six counties in New York state have at least one mental health court. This bill seeks to allow cases to be transferred with the consent of the district attorneys of both counties to an adjoining county with a mental health court when the county where the case is brought does not have a mental health court within the county.

The intent is to increase access to mental health treatment similar to the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in Albany County.

2025-26 NYS Budget Highlights



*Assemblymember
John T. McDonald III, RPh
standing for the pledge
of allegiance during
session.*

There is much to discuss from the 2025-26 NYS Budget, but I want to focus on just a few of the positive items that I prioritized in this budget, assisting those I represent and our communities:

Elimination of the Unemployment Trust Fund Debt – This removes an unfair burden for small businesses that they have endured for years and will reduce the number of bills they receive in the future, as well as \$7 billion in expenses. The antiquated UI Benefit will be improved for those who may be unemployed in the future, a win-win for business and labor, which is not always customary.

Manual Labor Payroll Issue – Fixing the manual labor payroll issue that was threatening only small businesses and ensuring that manual laborers are paid according to the law, and providing guidance to small businesses to comply without onerous penalties for honest mistakes.

Public Safety

- Meaningful changes to the Discovery laws, which were the priority for District Attorneys, focusing on making sure that cases are not dismissed for technical matters, yet ensuring individuals are provided all relevant information for the case.
- Meaningful changes to the involuntary commitment law to ensure that individuals in a severe behavioral health crisis can connect with stabilization services and wrap-around/follow-up care, which occurs in our health care system and prevents incarceration of individuals dealing with these challenges. Society expects the government to assist these patients, and I believe this is accomplished in this budget
- A significant change to increase the age of individuals to sit for law enforcement exams from the age of 35 to 43, providing a larger pool of candidates who can choose law enforcement for a career, and enhancing the pool of individuals with lived experience, which is critical as we look at policing today.

Local Government and Infrastructure

- Continuation of Temporary Aid and Incentives for Municipality (AIM) funds (\$50 million) for local governments to assist them as they continue to provide services to residents and control their property taxes.
- A 2-year commitment to increase Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) Aid for our local governments to \$50 million/year to help address the costs of road maintenance to benefit all our communities.
- Another \$500 million for the NYS Clean Water Infrastructure grant program, which is now over \$6 billion to help ensure that local communities have clean water.

Opportunities

- Expanding the Gold Star annuity payment to include eligibility for those individuals who died while on active duty. Before this, individuals would have had to die in combat to qualify.
- Creation of the NY Opportunity Promise Scholarship, which helps those individuals age 25-55 who are either unemployed, displaced from work, or seeking to work in sectors where there are workforce shortages, such as nursing, advanced manufacturing, AI, etc.
- Providing relief to school districts who are struggling to comply with the well-intended Electric Vehicle (EV) Bus requirement. Implementation of a waiver system for two years that can be renewed for two more years, with accountability measures, will help districts achieve this goal in a manner that is sensible and cost-effective.

My priorities this year have focused on three simple items that New Yorkers want: Affordability, Safety, and Opportunity. This budget makes significant advancements in these areas, and I look forward to continuing to make further progress.

Funding Available Through the 2025-26 NYS Budget

The 2025-26 NYS Budget included various funding streams that will be administered through state agencies. Please sign up for my weekly newsletter to remain up to date when the applications are released.

You can sign up on my Assembly website here

<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III/enews/>.

Need a speaker? I am always interested in speaking to groups and hearing what people have to say in the district. We have found great success with virtual meetings. This has provided me the opportunity to keep in touch with constituents. If your organization is interested in having me as a guest or would like a legislative update, please contact my office at 518-455-4474.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you in the district!



— Assemblymember
John T. McDonald III, RPh

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NEWS From



Assemblymember

John T. McDonald III

2025 Post NYS Budget and Legislative Session

2025 108th District Post Session



ALBANY / DISTRICT OFFICE:

Room 625, Legislative Office Building • Albany, New York 12248 • 518-455-4474

EMAIL: mcdonaldj@nyassembly.gov

WEB: www.nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III