



NEWS From Assemblymember John T. McDonald III

Summer 2026

2026 Post NYS Budget and Legislative Session

This year, the NYS Legislature passed a \$269 billion budget with no increases in income taxes, and I entered my fourth year as Chair of the NYS Assembly Governmental Operations Committee, a committee that had 744 bills introduced to it. Out of the 97 bills that I sponsored this year, 15 bills passed both houses of the NYS Legislature and will be considered by the Executive by the end of the year. In addition to my legislative duties and responsibilities, my team and 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 or if you need assistance. I believe in public service in the truest sense, which means that 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 are important to you.

Sincerely,

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh speaking on the importance of funding for local roads



Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh with Bishop Mark O'Connell



Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh with Troy School 16 students in the Assembly Chamber

2026-27 NYS Budget Highlights

This year’s budget truly focused on affordability and opportunity. While there are many important programs that are funded in the budget, the highlights below focus on addressing the challenges that many of our families are facing. In my 13 years as an Assemblymember, I have never seen this level of bipartisan support for a state budget.

Economic Development

- Continued and new funding for Alive Downtowns! to support our local historic theatres, Monument Square redevelopment in the City of Troy, Burdett Birth Center, and Peebles Island State Park
- Continued support for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and New York Forward programs. Funding that has been awarded to the City of Cohoes, City of Watervliet, City of Rensselaer, and City of Troy

Local Government and Infrastructure

- Historic and unprecedented tripled Temporary Municipal Aid (TMA) and a total of \$23,845,306 in Aid to Municipalities (AIM) aid for the 108th District, a 20.7% increase to help our local governments control property taxes
- One-year moratorium on the development of data centers in New York to allow the state to study their impact on communities and the environment. Data Centers are important in advancing technology, but also have a significant impact on water and energy consumption. Residential and business consumers should not be picking up the tab, the study will ensure that proper guardrails are put in place.
- Includes \$374.5 million for upstate transit operating assistance, an increase of 7.2 percent from last year
- Continued and increased investment in local infrastructure through CHIPS, Touring Routes Funding, PAVE-NY, Clean Water funds, etc.
- Continued funding for the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program, a grant program that supports the enhancement of security and safety by providing critical funding to strengthen volunteer fire departments and districts

Opportunities and Lowering Costs

Utility Costs

- Provides one-time Protecting Our Wallets Energy Rebate (POWER) checks of up to \$200 for eligible New Yorkers and \$1 billion statewide
- Returns excess gas and utility companies’ revenues to consumers
- Establishes the Residential Affordability Through Energy Savings (RATES) Commission to help lower costs
- Requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider ratepayer affordability, protecting consumers from unreasonable costs

Child Care and Pre-K

- Provides an additional \$65 million in tax relief for families by enhancing the Child and Dependent Care Credit by decoupling it from the federal credit and replacing it with a standalone credit in 2026
- \$39 billion in total school aid, a \$1.7 billion increase over last year and at least 4.2% more in Foundation Aid for school districts in the 108th District
- Expands Universal Pre-K (UPK) to support full-day instruction for 4-year-old children by Fall 2028, as well as consolidating UPK and Statewide Universal Full Day Pre-K into a single program and increased per-pupil Universal Pre-K Funding.
- Includes \$116 million for after-school programs
- Extends the deadline for electric school bus implementation by five years, allowing time for districts to prepare for a well-intended idea, yet one that is costly and difficult to implement at this time

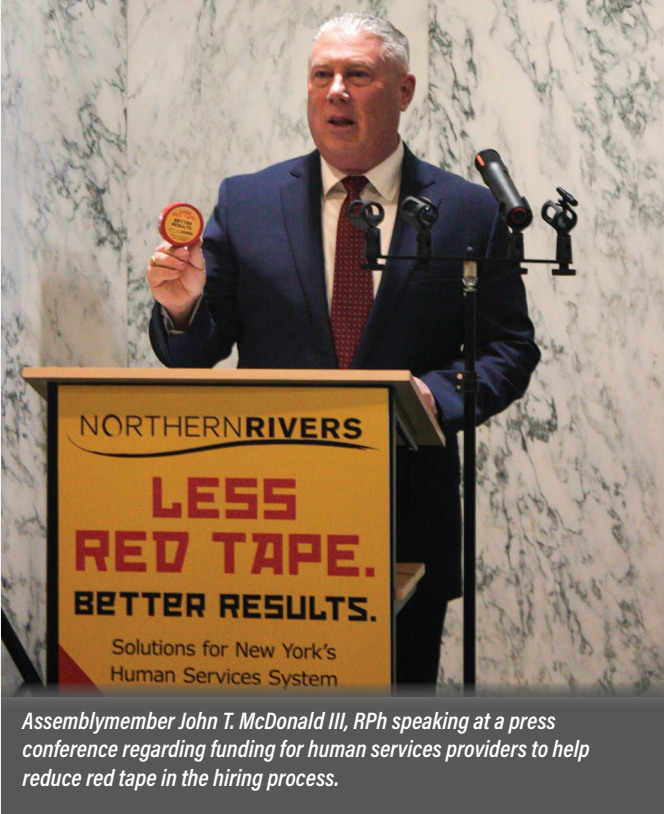
Reducing Auto and Home Insurance Costs

- Reforming laws to crack down on fraud and bring down auto insurance rates, banning discriminatory insurance company practices, making it harder for insurance companies to raise rates, and limiting their insurance companies excess profits to increase affordability for drivers
- Increasing transparency for home insurance as well as auto insurance by requiring insurers to notify policyholders about rate changes
- Requiring insurers to provide detailed information to DFS on how they price policies for multifamily residential buildings

Food Insecurity

- \$51 million investment in the Department of Health (DOH)’s Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) program, which will help New York’s network of about 2,700 food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens reach more New Yorkers in need. An additional \$15 million will strengthen and expand operations, allowing them to reach more people with healthier options
- \$55 million for the Nourish New York Program, which reroutes surplus agricultural products to those who need them most through the state’s food banks

My priorities continue to focus 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.



Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh speaking at a press conference regarding funding for human services providers to help reduce red tape in the hiring process.

Highlights of 2026 Legislative Accomplishments

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

A2330 - Requires electronic filing of all lobbying filings

This bill seeks to require electronic filing of all lobbying filings. The Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government receives approximately one thousand paper lobbying filings each year. Since lobbying filings are not public until they are entered into the Commission’s online filing system, the continued use of paper filings delays transparency to the public surrounding lobbying activity.

A4840A - Relates to the requirements for certification for certified interior designers

This bill aligns New York requirements for the certification of interior designers with those of a national certification organization for interior design professionals.

A5882C - Relates to payments by a pharmacy benefit manager to participating pharmacies

The Patient Access to Pharmacy Act (PAPA) seeks to simplify and change the methodology for pharmacy reimbursement for commercial health plans to a Cost-Plus model that is more transparent for patients, payors, and pharmacies while saving costs through the process.

A8814A - Relates to expanding opioid overdose prevention measures in certain settings

This bill would require school districts, public libraries, boards of cooperative education services, county vocational education and extension boards, charter schools, and non-public elementary and secondary schools to stock opioid antagonists, at no cost, provided by the Department of Health.

A8849B - Requires the department of health to facilitate the exchange of data between the state prescription drug program and electronic health records

This legislation amends the public health law to require the Department of Health to provide approvals to allow for seamless interoperability between electronic health records (EHRs) and the State’s prescription monitoring program (PMP). This technology streamlines efforts for providers when prescribing controlled substances and will save time, and includes necessary cross-checks.

A8897A - Dedicates a portion of the state highway system to Sgt Henry Johnson

This bill would rename the Patroon Island Bridge after local and national hero Sgt. Henry Johnson. 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. This bridge renaming is a fitting honor for a man whose bravery and sacrifice should be a model to us all.

A9274A - Requires merchants to round cash purchases to the nearest five cent denomination in order to reduce the circulation of pennies within New York state

As pennies gradually disappear from circulation, cash transactions rounded to the cent will become increasingly impractical. Starting in the Summer of 2025, businesses started posting signs in stores alerting customers of a “penny shortage” and asking them to use exact change when possible. Retailers are frustrated because there is no federal guidance on how they should handle transactions. As a result, each business is implementing its own policy on how to handle the change, which could lead to confusion and frustration amongst business owners and consumers. This bill would modernize and bring uniformity to how cash transactions are processed in New York State with a clear rounding system. This will help ensure a smooth transition as the nation moves away from the penny and protect consumers and businesses.

A9519 - Requires certain health insurance policies include coverage for services provided by pharmacists related to contraceptives

This bill would allow pharmacists to bill private insurance providers for their time spent dispensing contraception. This measure is essential to increasing pharmacist participation in providing contraceptive services while eliminating out-of-pocket costs for patients.

By ensuring reimbursement for their services, this bill will alleviate pressure on primary care providers and improve access to contraception, particularly in underserved and rural communities.

A10518 - Grants peace officer status to security officers employed by Albany Memorial Hospital, Samaritan Hospital, and St. Peter’s Hospital

Hospitals and their respective staff increasingly face complex public safety challenges, including workplace violence, behavioral health crises, and emergency department overcrowding. Security officers are often the first responders to incidents occurring on hospital property and must act swiftly to protect patients, visitors, and staff. This bill grants peace officer status to security officers employed by Albany Memorial Hospital, Samaritan Hospital, and St. Peter’s Hospital to allow them to maintain a safe environment.



Assemblymember McDonald, Speaker Carl Heastie, and Van Rensselaer Elementary School 5th Graders.

Funding
Available
Through
the 2026-27
NYS
Budget

The 2026-27 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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