



In this edition of my newsletter, I'm sharing the latest installment of my Affordability in Action video series, where I discuss the rising cost of health care and the policies I support to help lower costs and expand access to coverage. I also provide updates on important legislative work, including efforts to address problem gambling, ongoing debates surrounding New York's climate law and energy costs, and my perspective on the Assembly's recent budget proposal.

You will also find highlights from recent events throughout the community, from supporting nurses and public employees to recognizing local athletes, volunteers, and organizations that make our region stronger. I am always grateful for the opportunity to connect with residents and hear directly about the issues that matter most to you.

As always, my office is here to assist you with any state-related matters. If you need help navigating a state agency or have thoughts you would like to share, please feel free to contact my office at 518-377-0902 or SteckP@nyassembly.gov.

Best,

Phil Steck

Legislative Updates

Affordability in Action: The Rising Cost of Health Care

In the second installment of my *Affordability in Action* video series, I focus on another major issue that many constituents raise with my office: the rising cost of health care.

For years, I have supported the New York Health Act because it would ensure that every New Yorker has access to health coverage while reducing costs for families and small businesses. Under this proposal, residents would no longer face the administrative fees, premiums, deductibles, and co-pays required by private insurance companies. Instead, coverage would be provided through a single payer system that spreads costs across all New Yorkers, similar to how Social Security works.

An independent analysis by the RAND Corporation estimates that roughly 90 percent of New York households would save money under this model. In addition to supporting a single payer system, I also discuss other reforms that could help reduce costs, including legislation to stop pharmacy benefit managers from owning pharmacies, eliminating abusive telehealth facility fees, and addressing burdensome prior authorization requirements that delay care.

These reforms would not only lower costs but also improve access to quality health care for families across New York.

You can watch the full video below to learn more about the solutions I am advocating for to make health care more affordable.



Interview on Affordability on WTEN

Rising utility bills are placing an enormous strain on families across our region and are the number one issue my office hears from constituents about. Too many New Yorkers are opening their monthly statements and wondering how their costs increased so dramatically. That is why I recently joined John Gray on WTEN's Empire State Weekly to discuss why New York needs to invest more in the power grid, and the need for greater transparency in utility pricing and stronger oversight to ensure consumers are protected.

New Yorkers deserve to understand exactly what they are being charged for and why. No one should have to choose between heating their home and putting food on the table. I will continue pushing for policies that increase transparency, hold utility companies accountable, and put consumers first. You can watch the full segment below.



Why I Voted "Nay" on the Assembly Majority's Budget Proposal

This budget takes us right back to a problem that arose more than a decade ago, and unfortunately it shows that history has a way of repeating itself. In 2014, Bill de Blasio was elected Mayor of New York City. He ran on a platform that included a surtax on city residents earning over \$500,000 to fund Universal Pre-K in New York City. However, Governor Cuomo did not want to increase taxes on high earners, so he redirected funds from the state general fund to pay for universal Pre-K only in New York City.

Today, in Upstate New York, we have a lottery system where only about 50% of families receive state-funded preschool education and the other half of families have to pay for preschool at a cost of roughly \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year. It is not fair or just for taxpayers across New York State to pay for a preschool program that is only available to residents of New York City. Ten years later, Zohran Mamdani was elected Mayor of New York City on a "Tax the Rich" platform to fund additional childcare programs. Once again, the Governor refused to implement simple revenue raisers to fund programs and is now transferring \$1.5 billion from the general fund to New York City to expand

Pre-K and childcare programs for city residents.

Unfortunately, today the Assembly is once again deferring to the Governor and Mayor Mamdani, still leaving about half my constituents to pay \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year for preschool. I cannot in good conscience vote for a proposal that fails the people I represent, which is why I voted against the Assembly One House proposal. One of the reasons people choose to live in the 110th Assembly District is its public schools. Pre-K should be available for all children.

Yet another example of history repeating itself is the Assembly's proposal to spend \$2.6 billion to send utility rebate checks in October. This gimmick was done when Cuomo was Governor and again last year. Instead of spending \$2.6 billion on one-time checks to New Yorkers, we should invest that money in the power grid, as FDR did with rural electrification. Instead of the government paying to upgrade our 100-year-old electric grid, ratepayers pay for modernization through delivery fees. My constituents would prefer to see lower energy costs than receive a one-time check that likely won't cover one month's National Grid bill.

The future requires New York to be less dependent on imported fossil fuels which leave us at the mercy of market prices, while wind, solar, and geothermal are free once the government makes the initial investment. If the Northern Europeans can do it, so can we. In addition to the reasons I outlined, I did not vote for the Assembly One House Budget because it included \$175 million for immigration legal services.

I have been to numerous protests against the rogue actions of ICE and have spoken out about abolishing ICE and replacing it with a professional law enforcement agency that follows the law. However, I do not believe the answer to the lawlessness of the federal government is to spend \$175 million in

taxpayer dollars to provide free legal services to immigrants while the average middle-class family in my district must spend tens of thousands of dollars for legal representation when needed.

I am hopeful that my no vote will help push this conversation forward in budget negotiations so that we can achieve true universal Pre-K across all of New York, including for my constituents in the 110th Assembly District, and pursue real solutions to lower utility bills instead of temporary gimmicks. We need to enact forward-thinking solutions to help the middle class and not go “back to the future.”

To hear more on my thoughts on the budget, check out the WRGB interview with Tom Eschen below.



Assemblymember Phil Steck speaks about his No vote on the Assembly floor, and here explains why he is opposed.

Assembly Passes Legislative Package to Address Problem Gambling

New York has seen rapid growth in gambling in recent years, particularly with the expansion of mobile sports wagering. With that growth comes a responsibility to protect the public and support those who may be struggling with problem gambling. That is why I am proud that the Assembly passed a legislative package to strengthen safeguards around gambling and better support New Yorkers who need help.

This package includes my legislation to require commercial health insurance plans to cover outpatient treatment for problem gambling so that people seeking help are not forced to pay out of pocket or go without care. But treatment alone is not enough. We also need strong safeguards that help prevent gambling addiction before it starts. [You can read a press release on the full package of bills here.](#)



Ending the Subminimum Wage for those with Disabilities

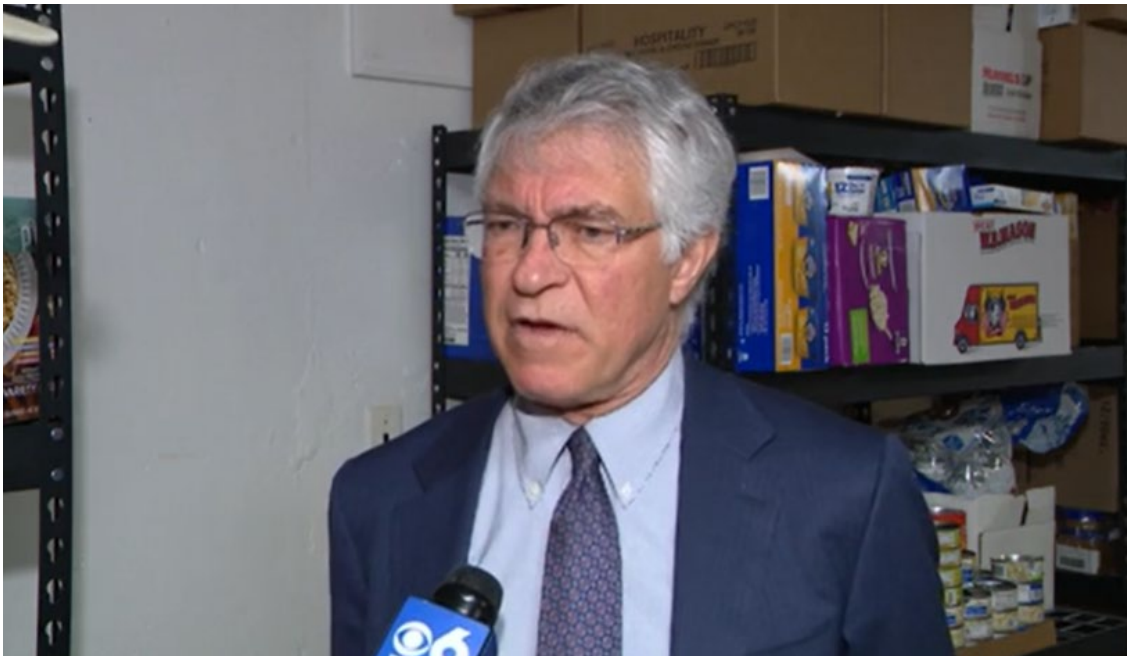
This session I am continuing to push hard to pass my legislation to end the outdated practice of paying workers with disabilities less than the minimum wage. This policy is rooted in an era that viewed people with disabilities as less capable and less deserving. That is simply not who we are today. Everyone who works deserves to be treated with dignity and paid fairly for the work they do. I am grateful for the opportunity to help bring attention to this issue and I look forward to working with my colleagues this session to finally address this injustice and ensure equal pay for equal work in New York. [To learn more, you can read this article by Ted Remsnyder at the Daily Gazette.](#)



Climate Law Debate

I was glad to speak with Channel 6 about the ongoing debate over New York's climate law as budget negotiations continue. As I said in the story, "This power grid is so old and in such poor condition that it would need investment anyway, so for people to point the finger at environmental regulation, it's just wrong."

[You can watch the full interview here.](#)



In the Community

Fix Tier Six

I was proud to stand with our hardworking public employees and union members at the Fix Tier 6 rally at MVP Arena this weekend. The men and women who keep our communities running every day deserve a retirement system that treats them fairly and recognizes the vital work they do. Tier 6 has

made it harder to recruit and retain the talented public servants New York relies on, and it is time we address those challenges.

I have always stood with organized labor, and I will continue to support efforts that strengthen the workforce that serves our communities. I want to thank the union leaders, members, and advocates who came together to make their voices heard. I am hopeful that the final New York State budget will have long needed reforms to Tier 6 to ensure that workers receive the benefits they are entitled to.



Protecting and Supporting Nurses

It was an honor to join the New York State Nurses Association for their Lobby Day in Albany and speak in support of the critical work they do every day on behalf of patients across New York. Nurses are the backbone of our health care system, and they are often the first to see when our hospitals and health care workers are stretched too thin. If we want New Yorkers to receive safe, quality care, we need to make sure our hospitals are properly funded, our staffing laws are enforced, and we are doing everything we can to recruit and retain nurses in our health care system. I have the utmost respect for NYSNA and the nurses they represent.



Addressing Problem Gambling

I had the opportunity to speak at the New York Council on Problem Gambling's annual conference and discuss an issue that is becoming increasingly concerning across our state. Problem gambling is on the rise, particularly among young men, and the rapid expansion of online and mobile sports betting has made access easier than ever before. While many people participate responsibly, we are also seeing the serious consequences that gambling addiction can have on individuals, families, and communities.

As the chair of the Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I believe we have a responsibility to address this growing challenge. I currently have several bills in the works aimed at strengthening protections, increasing awareness, and ensuring that resources are available for those who need help. Thank you to the New York Council on Problem Gambling for hosting this important conference and for the work they do every day to educate the public and support individuals struggling with gambling addiction. I look forward to continuing to work together to confront this issue and protect vulnerable New Yorkers.



Supporting TSA Agents

I stopped by Albany International Airport to thank the TSA agents who continue to show up and do their jobs every day even while the federal government is in

a partial shutdown. These hardworking public servants are being asked to keep our travelers safe while going without a paycheck until Congress resolves the funding issue, which is simply not fair. To show a small token of appreciation, we brought over lunch from Inferno Pizzeria for the team. I am grateful for their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to keeping the traveling public safe during a difficult time.



New York State Grant for Nisky Now

I presented a \$30,000 New York State grant to Nisky Now to help support their important work providing food assistance to students and families in the Niskayuna community. This funding will help sustain Nisky NOW's weekly food delivery program, which provides weekend meals and healthy snacks to students and families who may otherwise face food insecurity outside of school hours. At a time when many families are struggling with rising costs, programs like Nisky NOW play an essential role in making sure children have access to the nutritious food they need to learn, grow, and succeed. I want to thank Nancy Bushee, Jessica Brennan, Jennifer Lunetta and the incredible team of volunteers who make this program possible. Their dedication is making a real difference for families in our community.



Recognizing Local Champions

Congratulations to the incredible athletes of the RECON team from Woodlands Elite Albany. I was proud to present them with a proclamation recognizing their national championship at the NCA All Star Nationals in Houston. This talented group of athletes, ages 7 to 9, brought home the Level 2 Mini Small national title and represented the Capital Region with tremendous skill, teamwork, and dedication. I was truly impressed by the team and the level of talent these young athletes demonstrated. Their hard work, commitment, and sportsmanship are something our entire community can be proud of. Congratulations to the athletes, coaches, and families who helped make this achievement possible. You made the Capital Region proud.



Blood Drive Success

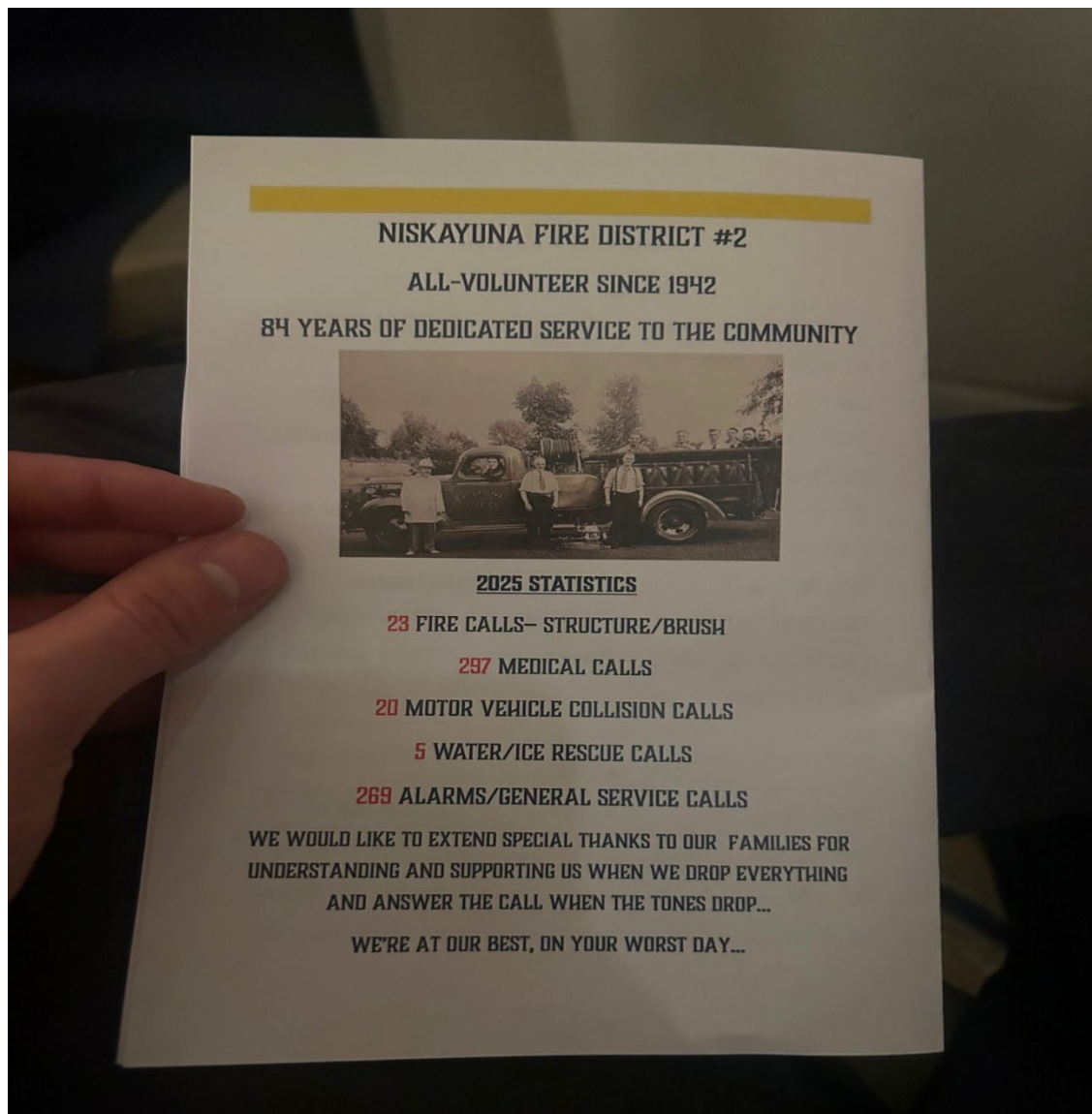
Thank you to everyone who came out to support my annual blood drive at the Shaker Heritage Society. I always appreciate the opportunity to have great conversations with constituents and hear directly about the issues that matter most to our community. I am continually impressed by the generosity of our neighbors. Because of the donations collected, up to 57 lives can be saved. A special thank you to the American Red Cross and the team who worked throughout the day to collect donations and make the event run so smoothly as well as the team at the Shaker Heritage Society. I am grateful to everyone who helped make this event such a success.



Recognizing the Work of our Local Firefighters

It was an honor to attend the Niskayuna Fire District 2 Installation Dinner and Awards Banquet as they celebrated 84 years of dedicated service to the

community. For more than eight decades, the members of Fire District 2 have answered the call to protect families, homes, and businesses throughout Niskayuna. Their courage, professionalism, and commitment to public safety do not go unnoticed. I was grateful for the opportunity to speak and to recognize the individuals who were installed and honored for their service. These awards reflect the countless hours of training, sacrifice, and teamwork that keep our community safe every day. Congratulations on 84 years of service, and thank you to all of the firefighters, volunteers, and leadership of Niskayuna Fire District 2 for your continued dedication.



Tips & Information

Mobile Office Hours

Need help with a state issue or community resource?

Join my office today, Thursday, April 9 for Mobile Office Hours at the Schenectady Senior Center from 10AM to 1PM at Hibernian Hall. We can assist with unemployment, HEAP, housing, and other state-related concerns.



Assemblymember
Phil Steck's



MOBILE OFFICE HOURS

Meet with a representative to have your questions answered or share concerns.

We're here to help!

Thursday, April 9
10am-1pm

Hibernian Hall
1748 State Street, Schenectady

Updates to SNAP Benefits

Don't lose out on your SNAP benefits! Federal law now requires certain SNAP recipients to meet specific work requirements. New Yorkers aged 18 to 64 who don't have a child under 14, are not pregnant or caring for a person who cannot care for themselves, and who do not have a disability that prevents them from working are now required to meet at least 20 hours per week of paid work, volunteer service, or other approved training activities to continue receiving SNAP benefits beyond three months in a three-year period. For additional information and details about exemptions, visit <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/snap/work-requirements.asp>.



Empire State Service Corps

Don't miss your chance to make a real difference! The Empire State Service Corps empowers SUNY students to serve their communities and drive meaningful change. The April 17 priority deadline is approaching fast. Step up and apply today: www.suny.edu/student-life/engagement/essc/.



