

NJ THIRD DISTRICT

Newsletter

STEVE SWEENEY
SENATE PRESIDENT
JOHN BURZICHELLI
DEPUTY SPEAKER
ADAM TALIAFERRO
ASSEMBLYMAN

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District Offices

Gloucester County
935 Kings Highway
Suite 400

West Deptford, NJ 08086
Phone: 856.251.9801

Salem & Cumberland Counties

199 East Broadway
Suite G

Salem, NJ 08079
Phone: 856.339.0808
Cumberland Residents
Phone: 856.455.1011

Third District Satellite Office at the Bridgeton Library

Takes place the first
Tuesday of the month,
from 3 pm – 5 pm,
at 150 E. Commerce
Street, Bridgeton, NJ
08302. For more
information, please call
our office at
856.455.1011

Additional School Aid a Centerpiece in 2018 State Budget

The New Jersey Legislature passed the 2018 Fiscal Year State Budget just before the July 4th holiday after a compromise was reached pertaining to the Governor's recommendations concerning Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey's reserve fund.

The New Jersey Senate and Assembly, along with the CEO of Horizon, struck a deal that will grant the state more authority over the health insurance corporation.

"We worked very hard on getting this budget passed, and I am very pleased that all parties reached a compromise," said Senate President Steve Sweeney.

Horizon is the only "not-for-profit" health insurance company in New Jersey. The legisla-

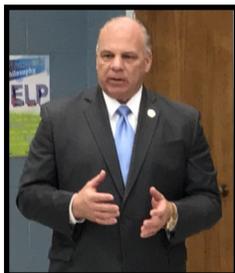
tion, now law, allows state regulators in 2018 to set a cap on Horizon's reserve fund, and if that amount is exceeded, that fund would be used for the benefit of its subscribers.

The \$34.7 billion dollar Fiscal Year 2018 budget provides aid to school districts based on a fair formula that eliminates the growth cap and reallocates Adjustment Aid to underfunded districts, an effort advanced and championed by Senate President Sweeney.

There will be a supplemental \$181 million dollars allocated for underfunded districts, preschool expansion, and Extraordinary Special Education.

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Sweeney Outlines Plan to Increase School Aid for Next Year



Senate President Sweeney and Senate Budget Chair Paul Sarlo recently pledged to pass a millionaire's tax in January 2018 as part of a comprehensive plan to provide every school district with at least 70 percent of the state school aid they are owed by the 2018-19 school year.

Building on the \$146 million in additional school aid for underfunded districts that is included in this year's budget, Senator Sweeney and Senate leaders pledged to add an additional \$800 million in school aid to next year's budget by dedicating \$800 million from a millionaire's tax, other revenue and reallocated Adjustment Aid to increase school funding in the FY 2019 budget.

"We took a landmark first step toward restoring fairness to school funding for schoolchildren and taxpayers in this year's budget. We will allocate an additional \$146 million to underfunded

districts on a fair basis for the first time by removing the Growth Cap to provide more aid to districts with growing enrollment and by beginning the phase out of Adjustment Aid from districts that are getting more state aid than they deserve," said Senate President Sweeney. "Now, we are building on that achievement by announcing that we will enact a millionaire's tax in January to provide an additional \$800 million in school aid next year as part of our commitment to fairly and fully fund the School Funding Reform Act of 2008. The SFRA is constitutional, and when fully funded, it will provide every schoolchild with a 'thorough and efficient' education and every taxpayer with property tax fairness. We just have to do our part."

The allocation of \$800 million would provide school districts with more than five times the additional school aid they received this year, enabling underfunded districts to both improve the quality of education and cut property taxes.

"The millionaire's tax will be S1, the first bill we pass when a new governor takes office in January," Senator Sweeney vowed.

Funding Allocations to Benefit Farmland Preservation Pass the Legislature

A series of measures to appropriate funding for farmland preservation purposes has passed the Legislature and is headed to the Governor's desk.

Assembly bill 4580 is sponsored by Assemblyman Adam Taliaferro and Deputy Speaker John Burzichelli, and appropriates \$2,900,000 from the "2009 Farmland Preservation Fund" for grants to certain nonprofit organizations for farmland preservation purposes. It advanced out of the Legislature on June 22.

A second bill appropriates \$22,385,743 to the State Agriculture Development Committee for farmland preservation purposes, completed passage on June 19.

In addition, Senate bill 2988 and Assembly bill 4582 are sponsored by Senator Sweeney, Assemblyman Taliaferro, and Assemblyman Burzichelli, and appropriate \$7,500,000 from constitutionally dedicated Corporation Business Tax revenues for planning incentive grants to municipalities for farmland preservation purposes. It advanced out of the Legislature on June 22.

"We put great value on our farmlands and open space," said Senator Sweeney. "The public has always come through when we have asked for funding in the past, but having a dedicated source is important because now we won't have to do that anymore. We are proud to do our part to keep these invaluable resources as they are."

"When you consider how many people are fed because of the farms in our state, and how many people have a high quality of life because of the open space available to them, it is obvious why we have to take action to preserve them," added Assemblyman Burzichelli. "These allocations will ensure that our communities continue to benefit for a long time to come."

"Upper Pittsgrove Township recently reached 10,000 acres of preserved farmland, which is not much less than the size of the Island of Manhattan," noted Assemblyman Taliaferro. "That is just one municipality. I am pleased that,

because of these funds, the residents of our district and our state can count on many more acres preserved in their communities."

In June, Senator Sweeney joined Upper Pittsgrove Mayor Jack Cimprich, the Department of Agriculture Secretary Doug Fisher, local officials, members of the State Board of Agriculture, and the Salem County Agricultural

Development Board to recognize Upper Pittsgrove's historic achievement in being the first municipality in the state to preserve 10,000 acres of agricultural land under the Farmland Preservation Program.

Upper Pittsgrove developed a Farmland Preservation Plan in 2004 and was awarded Planning Incentive Grant funding in the same year. Nearly one-third of the community's agricultural land is permanently preserved.

The planning incentive grant process is implemented by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey, which sets forth the information and tools needed by all levels of government to accommodate growth while protecting critical farmland.

"Preserving our farmlands is vital to our environment and our economic development," said Senator Sweeney. "Our farmers are the backbone of our great State and the agricultural sector is key to the economy. Farmland preservation is an investment in the community that will help benefit Upper Pittsgrove's residents and the State of New Jersey."



Senator Sweeney joined Upper Pittsgrove Mayor Jack Cimprich and NJ Department of Agriculture Secretary Doug Fisher in Upper Pittsgrove for preservation milestone.

Private Wildlife Habitat Certification Program Measure Advances in the Assembly



Legislation co-sponsored by Deputy Speaker Burzichelli that would direct the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection to establish a private wildlife habitat certification program passed in the Assembly on June 8. The certifying entities could include nonprofit conservation organizations, for-profit landscaping companies, or any other private entities, provided

that the Commissioner has determined that the entity possesses the appropriate expertise, qualifications, and resources to be a "certified private wildlife habitat." The certifying entities would be authorized to charge fees to cover reasonable costs associated with the inspection and certification process. The bill would also require that the rules and regulations promote the use of native plants.

"It is essential that we protect our wildlife habitats and foster new ones," stated Deputy Speaker Burzichelli.

Prior to altering a property for the purposes of establishing a "certified private wildlife habitat," the property owner would be required to obtain a certificate of registration and file it with the municipal clerk in which the property is located. The clerk would be authorized to charge a fee not to exceed \$25. A certificate of registration would expire two years after the issue date that could be renewed for an additional two years upon submitting a written and signed certification affirming that the property continues to comply with all applicable standards. Only one renewal would be allowed, but a new certificate could be acquired requiring a new inspection.

A registered certified private wildlife habitat would be entitled to an affirmative defense against any liability for a violation of a municipal ordinance.

Legislation to Establish “Nourishing Young Minds Fund” Signed into Law



On July 21, the Governor approved legislation to create a non-lapsing revolving fund in the Department of Agriculture, to be known as the “Nourishing Young Minds Initiative Fund,” that will allocate federal and state funds to increase participation in the “Breakfast After the Bell” program that provides meals to school children. Senate President Sweeney and Assemblyman Taliaferro are primary sponsors of the legislation.

A report from the Advocates for the Children of New Jersey found that New Jersey ranked 23rd in the U.S. for participation in the school breakfast program.

“Establishing a more stable fund for school nutrition programs is exactly what is needed for their survival,” said Assemblyman Taliaferro. “Without these programs, many children in the state would go without having at least one nutritional meal a day. Nutritional programs are a great service to our communities and deserve a stable funding mechanism in place to ensure they will be around for future generations.”

“Breakfast After the Bell” is a program that serves breakfast to students once the school day has officially started, rather than before school, when most students have not yet arrived. This approach boosts participation, giving more students a healthy start to the school day.

Money in the “Nourishing Young Minds Initiative Fund” will be used to provide support and funding to child food and nutrition programs in the state, including outreach and programmatic support by the Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, or community-based organizations; grants to fund one-time startup or expansion costs of “breakfast after the bell” programs, and grants to fund one-time start-up or expansion costs of summer nutrition programs.

“The Breakfast After the Bell program has been successful, but we need to do more to increase participation and to reach our students. There is no excuse for childhood hunger in America,” said Senator Sweeney. “This legislation will provide additional funding for this program, which provides nutritious meals to students before they begin their school day.”

Third Legislative District Continues Mobile Office Visits to Expand Services

The Third District Legislators continue to bring their office services and resources to residents across the district.

Mobile offices are designed for residents to stop in and seek assistance with state agency difficulties by speaking one-on-one with a constituent services staffer. Visitors may also express opinions regarding legislation and issues of state importance. Resource materials, including information pertaining to state programs and energy assistance programs, are available for residents to take home.

“Our mobile offices are a chance to provide greater accessibility to our residents in the convenience of their neighborhood,” said Senate President Sweeney.

“The Third District traveling offices provide an opportunity to seek assistance in person on matters related to the State of New Jersey,” added Deputy Speaker Burzichelli.

“There are many advantages to visiting our mobile office locations, especially if seeking a convenient way to learn more about our office and how we can assist,” said Assemblyman Taliaferro.

One of the initiatives highlighted at mobile offices is the TRUE Program, a utility assistance program for medium income residents. The program offers grants to residents who are behind on electric or gas bills due to a temporary financial crisis. Staff will have application materials on hand for interested residents, and the Third District Office is an intake site for applications.

The mobile office schedule is available on our website, www.njlegdistrict3.com.

Constituent Corner: Jersey Fresh Website Offers Details on Local Produce

As the Garden State, New Jersey is renowned for its freshly-grown fruits and vegetables, and this produce plays an integral part in the state’s economy and its agricultural success. The Jersey Fresh advertising and quality graded program was created in 1984 to assist New Jersey farmers to inform consumers about the availability and variety of produce grown in the state. Since then, Jersey Fresh has allowed farmers to register to use the Jersey Fresh logo, indicating that the contents have been inspected and meet quality standards equal to or better than the highest standard of quality, U.S. No. 1.

The Jersey Fresh website, www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov, offers valuable resources to both farmers and consumers. Information on the website includes activities at New Jersey

farms, roadside stand and organic farm locations, food safety tips, and nutrition information. There is also information on the growing wine industry and agri-tourism industry in the state, including winery locations.

In addition, the website lists which fruits and vegetables are in season, where consumers can pick their own produce, and recipes. There is also an interactive map that conveniently makes searching for local roadside markets and farmers markets easy.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture has worked to make Jersey Fresh products readily available by working with restaurants, schools, communities, and more. As residents of the Garden State, it is important to support local farmers by purchasing produce with the Jersey Fresh logo.

Spotlight: Sweeney Joins Schools Development Authority for Salem School Tour



On June 21, Senator Sweeney joined Charles McKenna, CEO of New Jersey's SDA, on a tour of St. Mary's School in Salem as a possible space for Salem Middle School students after the collapse of a ceiling.

On June 21, Senate President Sweeney joined Salem City Mayor Charles Washington and Charles McKenna, Chief Executive Officer of New Jersey's Schools Development Authority (SDA) on a tour of St. Mary's School in Salem. The SDA arranged the tour as part of the effort to find appropriate space for students following the collapse of a classroom ceiling at the middle school last September.

"I want to thank CEO McKenna and the SDA for moving quickly to identify possible solutions to the challenges faced by the Salem School District," said Senator Sweeney.

"Our top priority is to protect the safety and well-being of

our students, while also making sure they are educated in the most efficient and effective way possible."

Immediately after the collapse of the classroom ceiling, students at Salem Middle School were transferred to one of three different locations. Third grade students were moved to the nearby John Fenwick Academy, students in fourth through seventh grades were transferred to makeshift classrooms at Fenwick Plaza, and eighth graders are currently utilizing space at Salem High School.

"I applaud our teachers and students for making the best of what has been a difficult situation," said Assembly Deputy Speaker John Burzichelli. "We will continue to work with the SDA to make sure we get Salem Middle School students back into an appropriate facility, as quickly as possible."

"Our top priority as lawmakers, parents, and public officials must be to make sure we are giving our children every chance to succeed," added Assemblyman Adam Taliaferro. "Making sure students are in an environment that is conducive to learning is essential to living up to that mandate."

St. Mary's School is a former parochial school located in Salem near St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish – St. Mary's Church. The property became available in June.

New State Budget Includes Additional Funding for Vital Services and Programs

Continued from Page 1.

"This budget provides an increase of aid to underfunded school districts, which was a priority in revising the school funding formula," said Deputy Speaker Burzichelli.

"The budget that was passed will benefit many people and programs in our state," said Assemblyman Taliaferro.

Additional provisions in the budget include increased funding for tobacco cessation and prevention programs, \$20 million dollars for wage increases for direct care professionals, as

well as a \$2.51 billion contribution to the New Jersey Pension Fund, which is a 35% increase from the \$1.86 billion in the 2017 fiscal year.

The budget also included \$13 million dollars for women's services, including sexual assault prevention, domestic violence prevention, and family planning services. There was a \$30 million dollar line item for food stamps, prisoner re-entry programs, and legal services, and \$15 million was allocated for health care, including money for cancer research.

Updates of District Legislation in the 2016-2017 Legislative Session

- Proposal for Expanding Paid Family Leave Passes S3085 (Sweeney)** – This measure would increase the duration and weekly amount of family temporary disability benefits, and was passed by the Assembly and Senate in June. The measure will expand the number of weeks of benefits from six to twelve, and the maximum number of days from 42 to 84. It also increases the weekly benefits from two-thirds of a worker's average weekly wage to 90 percent. The bill now goes to the Governor's desk for signature.
- CDL Testing Pilot Program Bill is Law A3946/S2364 (Burzichelli)** - This bill establishes a CDL Testing Pilot Program to provide for commercial driver license testing by private third party vendors, and requires the chief administrator of the NJ MVC to authorize third-party administration of commercial testing on a more permanent basis based on an evaluation of the program. The bill establishes the CDL Testing Pilot Program within the commission, and directs the chief administrator to implement the program. The measure was signed into law February 6.
- Taliaferro "Ugly Produce" Legislation Advances AJR138 (Taliaferro)** – A resolution sponsored by Assemblyman Taliaferro designating the first full week in June of each year as "Ugly Produce Week" was passed by the Assembly on June 8. It was referred to the Senate Economic Growth Committee. By establishing "Ugly Produce Week," the resolution would promote greater public acceptance, use, and consumption of cosmetically imperfect fruits, vegetables, and grains.
- Non-Operating School Districts Bill Advances A4352/S2843 (Sweeney, Burzichelli, Taliaferro)** – Legislation sponsored by Senator Sweeney, Assemblyman Burzichelli, and Assemblyman Taliaferro became law on July 7. The measure will provide for the elimination of newly formed non-operating school districts, establish procedures for eliminating a deficit that existed prior to a merger, and authorize the renting of school buildings for 10 years. After passing the Legislature previously, it was conditionally vetoed by the Governor on June 12. After considering his conditions, the Assembly amended and passed the bill again on June 22, passed the Senate, and was approved by the Governor.