



## 2014 Agenda

A diverse coalition of organizations are working together to advance meaningful improvements to Long Island's quality of life and our economy. Our agenda includes six critical issue areas with a mix of regulatory, budget and legislative actions which are practical and reasonable to achieve that Albany must take to help Long Island.

### 1) Small Business, Jobs, Economic Development

- a) Tax-Deferred IRA Accounts for Small Businesses

### 2) Transportation

- a) Funding for Complete Streets Infrastructure
- b) Strengthening Public Transit
- c) Give Local Communities Home Rule Flexibility on Speed Limits
- d) Transit Village Infrastructure Program

### 3) Sewage & Infrastructure

- a) Increase Sewer Funding Through the EFC and Long Island Sewer Priorities: Bay Park STP, Mastic/Shirley and Hempstead

### 4) Energy & Environment

- a) Safe Disposal of Pharmaceutical Drugs
- b) Off-Shore Wind
- c) Solar
- d) LI Clean Water

### 5) Human Services

- a) Care Giving
- b) Energy Advocate
- c) Harm Reduction Public Health & Safety
- d) Patient Handling
- e) Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center

### 6) Post-Sandy

- a) Homeowner Insurance
- b) Expedited Recovery Payments through CDBG-DR
- c) Community Capacity Building and Assistance for Recoveries

# 1. SMALL BUSINESS, JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## a) Tax Deferred IRA Accounts for Small Businesses

*Support a bill for tax-deferred IRA accounts for small businesses, where they may deposit part of their profits and have an opportunity to withdraw from such an account tax-free during the times of an officially defined recession, e.g. help businesses to prepare for the next economic recession by having them draw on their own tax-deferred accounts without tax penalty.*

The state will decide when to allow small business owners to withdraw money, in addition to already defined economic circumstances such as lack of economic growth for six months. These circumstances may include but are not limited to state's desire to stimulate economy at any point in time, withdrawals after damage from natural disasters such as hurricane Sandy, and withdrawals allowed for the employers who have created a certain number of jobs (if, at a certain point, the state wants to incentivize job creation).

The state will define the type of business expenses that the money can be allocated towards such as capital expenses, paying employees' salaries, paying vendors, etc. The state can create a sliding scale of how much each small business will be able to put aside in tax-deferred accounts depending on the size of the small business or its revenues. Current conditions for accessing capital via bank, SBA loans, CDC loans, and private venture capital are typically much more restrictive in their definition of who can access capital and on what conditions.

The money that small businesses will be allowed to put into their tax-deferred IRAs will need to stay in the account for at least three years (unless the economic slowdown comes sooner than three years). After three years, business owners can withdraw the money at any time at the current tax rate. The money for small business IRA's can be invested in any of the regular IRA's monetary instruments such as money markets, bonds, mutual funds, stock market, etc.

# 2. TRANSPORTATION

When the MTA was crippled by Superstorm Sandy, those villages and towns with a variety of transportation options were the most mobile. In the future, communities with compact development coupled with safe streets for bicycles and pedestrians, and a healthy bus and rail system, will be the most resilient to emergencies and everyday life.

## a) Funding Complete Streets Infrastructure

Long Island has taken the lead in the state advancing Complete Streets in our communities. Unfortunately, capital funding for improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure has taken a substantial hit recently:

The new federal transportation law, MAP-21, cut federal dollars for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure by 30 percent. Additionally, NYSDOT's new Preservation First policy categorically excludes new pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure from 80% of the spending in the state. We do not believe this follows the spirit, or the letter, of the 2011 Complete Streets law. In addition, New York State will be spending 40 percent fewer dollars on pedestrian and bicycle-only projects over the

next four years than it did before passage of the law. Governor Cuomo's recent announcement of \$37 million in additional federal transportation enhancements dollars for pedestrian and bicycling projects is a great first step, but it comes after four years of drought in which there were no solicitations for funding from this program. What is needed now is a commitment for sustained and dedicated funding in the future.

In 2012, New York State was ranked worst in the nation for pedestrian and bicycling safety – 27% of the fatalities on our roads were pedestrians and bicyclists, but only about 2% of planned state funding between 2014-2017 will go towards infrastructure to improve safety for these roadway users. We can, and should, do better.

- A budget line, with a minimum additional commitment of \$20 million annually over the next five years, dedicated to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure must be included in the final budget. These funds will help assure we don't fall behind creating a true multi-modal system. This could help provide funding for programs such as Local Safe Streets and Traffic Calming Grants Program on Long Island, cancelled at the end of 2012, and a Safe Routes to Transit program that would enhance transit access to bus and LIRR stations across Long Island.

- NYSDOT's Preservation First policy must consider new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as required by the 2011 Complete Streets law. Additionally, the Legislature should adopt a bill (S6340/A8433) to amend the Complete Streets Law to include maintenance and restriping projects should be adopted.

#### **b) Strengthening Public Transit**

Unlike commuter rail service, bus service is inexpensive and very flexible. This makes it uniquely capable of meeting Long Island's mobility needs during emergencies and non-emergencies alike. Unfortunately, operating funds for Long Island's bus systems have been severely constrained over the last several years, resulting in service cuts and fare hikes that have left riders stranded. Last year, your efforts brought an additional \$5 million in funding for Nassau Inter-County Express (NICE) and \$2 million more for Suffolk County Transit (SCT). Using these resources, NICE restored previously cut service and SCT added an unprecedented level of Sunday service to ten of its routes. But demand for additional service is high. More predictable and dedicated funds for NICE and SCT will allow transit operators to better plan for the needs of the system, and will protect riders' ability to get to and from work and school, and more easily allow them to conduct their daily lives. The Governor's proposed budget provides additional funding to both systems although the level of funding increase will not even match the increase in inflation, nor does the budget address structural inequities in how funding is allocated. Suffolk County Transit, as a percentage, continues to see much fewer state dollars in operating support compared to other metropolitan suburban counties.

The Executive Budget also proposes to take \$40 million out of dedicated transit funds and use the money to cover debt costs that the State previously agreed to pay for. Those are funds the MTA could use to increase service, reduce proposed fare hikes and better maintain buses and train stations. This action is exactly what the Transit Lockbox bill intended to stop.

- Increase State Transportation Operating Assistance for NICE & SCT, and stabilize revenue sources for these transit providers.

- Oppose the diversion of dedicated transit funds.

### **c) Give Local Communities Home Rule Flexibility on Speed Limits**

Speeding is a significant concern in our downtowns. Unfortunately, local leaders often do not have the authority to lower the speed limits in their communities, creating an impediment to those communities implementing Complete Streets designs and policies. In New York State, the statutory speed limit is 55 MPH. Local jurisdictions may deviate from the statutory speed limit, but how these changes are to be made, and the range of acceptable speeds, are dictated by state statute. For each type of jurisdiction—e.g. town, city, village—there is a specific state statute. In some communities, in order to lower the speed limit on Main Street, a law needs to be passed in Albany.

These laws create a legal framework that is out of touch with the needs and realities of current planning objectives and priorities. A more flexible standard that empowers local jurisdictions is a better approach.

New York State should switch to a policy that empowers local jurisdictions to make these decisions about local roads without dictating a one-size-fits-all approach to planning and highway safety.

Amend S1356/A6089 to enable all communities across the state to lower speed limits to 20 MPH if warranted by local conditions.

### **d) Transit Village Infrastructure Program**

Many of Long Island's communities already have existing plans to support smarter downtown development around transit stations. What local municipalities often lack are the resources to implement the underlying infrastructure needed to support these efforts (e.g. sewerage, walkable streets, etc.). New York State should enact a Transit Village Infrastructure Grant Program to allow municipalities to quickly advance plans for redevelopment.

## **3. WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE:**

### **a) Funding for Long Island Wastewater Projects.**

The Long Island Lobby Coalition is supporting funding for the following wastewater infrastructure priorities on Long Island:

**Bay Park STP in Nassau County** – this STP treats approximately 43% of Nassau County's wastewater and discharges over 50 million gallons per day of treated effluent into the Western Bays, a sub region of the South Shore Estuary Reserve. The plant does not remove nitrogen and chlorine from its effluent and this has taken its toll on the surrounding waterways. The plant was submerged by a 9-foot tidal wave in Superstorm Sandy, causing the release of 2.2 billion gallons of un-treated and partially treated sewage effluent. The plant remains on life support, powered by external generators. The County has been working to secure and bond monies to make needed repairs and upgrades to the plant. To date the County has secured over \$700 million. It is critical that funds be directed to fix, upgrade, and provide an ocean outfall pipe for the Bay Park sewage treatment plant.

**Mastic/Shirley Sewers and Infrastructure** – The Forge River has become the poster child for environmental, economic and public health consequences attributed to a lack of sewer infrastructure. The benefits of sewers in this area include restoration of the Forge River, protection of the South Shore Estuary and revitalization of the community including the downtown area.

In January 2009, the Suffolk County Department of Public Works completed a sewer study that provided a three-phase plan for constructing sewers and provided possible sites for sewer treatment plants. Following that study the Suffolk County Legislature directed the Department of Public Works

to create Maps and Plans for phase one, creation of a sewer district on Montauk Highway in Shirley/Mastic. The cost of constructing this is astronomical and will need the assistance of state and federal subsidies to become a reality. This is needed not only for economic development along the business corridor, but also to address the discharge of excessive nitrogen into our groundwater, which further pollutes the Forge River. Outdated septic systems and antiquated cesspools have been identified as a major problem to the deterioration of the surrounding tributaries in the area.

**Hempstead** – The Village of Hempstead, New York State’s most populous village, is on the verge of the region’s most transformative mixed-use TOD project, providing a national model for suburban downtown redevelopment. A Public-Private Partnership between the Village and Renaissance Downtowns-UrbanAmerica is positioned to break ground on this \$2+ billion revitalization in mid-2012, representing the creation of over 10,000 construction job years and 3,500 permanent jobs.

To effectuate this change, Hempstead must address its 80+ year old antiquated sewage system, which is tied into the Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant. Hempstead’s system is plagued with problems and costly repairs due to clogging, breakage, inflow, infiltration, and insufficient capacity especially during heavy rain events. It is estimated that the necessary improvements will run between \$25-\$32 million, of which \$5 million has already been earmarked. The project has tremendous local and regional support.

## **4. ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **a) Safe Disposal of Pharmaceutical Drugs**

Pharmaceutical contamination in groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuaries and bays is an emerging issue throughout New York. Flushing unwanted or unused medication has been the common disposal practice, despite the fact that sewage treatment plants, septic systems, and drinking water infrastructure were never designed to remove these contaminants. Pharmaceuticals enter wastewater from a variety of sources, including the flushing of unused medications. A nationwide study done in 1999 and 2000 by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) found low levels of drugs such as antibiotics, hormones, contraceptives and steroids in 80% of the rivers and streams tested. Although more research is needed, research available confirms the presence of pharmaceuticals in NY’s water sources.

*There are currently no local, state, or federal policies that prevent improper disposal of pharmaceutical drugs.* New Yorkers need to stop flushing unused and expired medications. This can be done by having convenient disposal options available combined with an aggressive education campaign. For the health and safety of their communities and their environment, all New Yorkers deserve access to safe and healthy drug disposal programs. New York needs an extended producer responsibility program to fully fund take-back programs that can significantly impact the amount of pharmaceutical pollution in New York’s waters. Taxpayers should not and cannot bear the cost of proper disposal for all types of waste. New York State has a precedent for requiring producers to bear the cost of disposal as seen in its electronic waste law. Extended producer responsibility is the only way to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to regular pharmaceutical take-back without bearing the cost of this disposal.

### **b) Offshore Wind**

There is a tremendous offshore wind resource both in the Great Lakes and in the Atlantic Ocean. Not only does New York have substantial offshore wind resources, but recent polls show 8 of 10 Long Islanders support offshore wind development. *Now is the time to aggressively move forward with siting offshore wind for Long Island.* There are currently a number of offshore planning initiatives and

existing proposals that have the potential to bring job-producing clean energy to New York. In addition, a 900 MW wind farm planned for off the tip of Long Island has very real potential to feed a growing and hungry Long Island market if it leads to a power purchase agreement in 2014.

The consequences of our nation's shortsighted energy choices are never more visible than a catastrophic environmental disaster. Superstorm Sandy is just one example of extreme weather events, which are predicted to increase in frequency as a result of climate change. In the days after the storm, Long Islanders saw the vulnerability that comes with relying heavily on one particular source of energy. Moreover, our geographic isolation illustrates the fact that there are few resources being generated locally. Diversifying our sources of energy will create greater stability for the future. With miles and miles of coast, Long Island should invest aggressively in offshore wind farms. The problems associated with poor energy choices may be daunting, but opportunity abounds for positive change. Wind is emission free, renewable, domestic and abundant offshore.

LIPA has released an RFP for 280 MW of renewable energy. This year, the RFP provides a real opportunity to advance offshore wind for Long Island. Right now there is a proposal, known as the Deepwater Wind Project, for 280 MW of wind energy, off the east end of Long Island. The proposal has the potential for 200-240MW to be in operation by 2018.

### **c) Solar**

Long Island solar utility incentives are managed differently than those in the rest of the state, which are managed by NYSERDA. Currently, a resident in Queens could receive up to \$25,000 in solar incentives from NYSERDA, while Long Islanders are capped at \$6,600 from PSEG-LI. This is down from \$17,500 just one year ago today. The volatility and changing utility incentives make it extremely hard for companies to plan, manage messages to clients, and follow business plans.

*New York should provide stability and uniformity in respect to funding statewide programs over the long term. This should be in line with Governor Cuomo's plan for providing \$150 million over the next decade.* Doing so would solidify New York's commitment to solar growth and allow businesses to grow and invest in training and hiring employees, expanding green jobs in the state.

With rising electricity needs, plenty of sunshine, and a local workforce primed for green jobs, New York has what it takes to lead the new solar economy. But the state has a policy structure that's supported less than 150 MW of installed solar to date – that's not even 0.01% of New York's electricity mix. As a result, clean energy jobs and investment have been pouring into neighboring states that have more aggressive policies. Neighboring New Jersey has the third most PV installations in the country, while New York is lagging behind at number 11. We can do better!

Current state-wide policy initiatives are stifling growth on Long Island for companies who want to move forward but are limited. There are several policies and action items that would help mitigate these current challenges.

### **d) Clean Water**

On Long Island, a safe supply of clean drinking water and healthy creeks, bays and harbors support a multi-billion dollar economy fueled by tourism, boating, fishing, healthy seafood, and a desirable way of life for 2.8 million Nassau and Suffolk residents. Scientists have determined that increasing pollution from sewage, pesticides and toxic chemicals threaten Long Island's water. Aging sewer and septic systems leak nitrogen into our underground supply of fresh drinking water, which flows into our creeks, bays and harbors. This leads to several species of Toxic Tides including Brown Tide and the lethal strain of Red Tides. These Toxic Tides choke sea life, kill fish and cause shellfish to be harmful if eaten. Fortunately, we can fix it. Long Island needs new water quality standards to reduce the amount of sewage pollution in our local waters and improve, upgrade and modernize existing sewer

and septic systems. *We support a **revised** bill, with the input from all parties, that provides reduced nitrogen standards for ground and surface water and creates a more holistic approach for water protection and management.*

## **5) HUMAN SERVICES**

### **a) Caregiving**

New York's funding for family caregivers is woefully inadequate. While the value of services provided by family caregivers in New York is estimated to be \$32 billion, they receive only \$2 million in state funding to help with their efforts. *Investing funding in New York's family caregivers saves the state millions of dollars each year by keeping those who need care at home rather than in more expensive nursing homes.* Funding respite and adult day care helps contain costs and delays or prevents the use of expensive tax-funded nursing home and emergency care. It's also allows people to remain in their home as they age for as long as possible.

### **b) Consumer Protections**

While utility cost soar across the region, New Yorkers are left without a strong voice as utility companies hire lawyers and other experts to push through rate hikes. *Establishing an independent consumer advocate office in New York will help protect consumers' interests representing them to ensure rate hikes and other regulatory issues that may impact them and their household budgets are fair.* According to a recent AARP survey of New Yorkers over the age of 50 in New York City and Long Island, 69% said their elected officials weren't doing enough to protect people affected by rising energy costs and 76.7% said they thought New York needed to establish an independent consumer advocate office.

### **c) Harm Reduction Public Health & Safety**

The heroin crisis on Long Island has impacted many families and communities. A Newsday article from January 25, 2014 states "The fatal and nonfatal overdose reflect a nationwide trend toward more use of the drug as opioid pain pills becomes hard to obtain amid increased regulation and a dwindling street availability." Long Island heroin fatal overdose accounted for record 121 people in Nassau and Suffolk in 2012 and at least 120 in 2013 (Newsday January 25, 2014). Heroin is cost effective due to the low cost of \$4-10 per pack compared to \$50-80 per opioid pill. Heroin which is eventually injected with a syringe increase the risk of HIV transmission and other blood-borne pathogens (Hepatitis C). Heroin addiction fosters increase utilization of the drug in order to maintain the drug intoxication. Nassau County medical examiner officials state their preliminary 2013 heroin overdose totals is estimate a rise of 10 percent.

The increase usage of heroin fosters the need of increase capital thereby increase crime rates. The NYSDOH AIDS Institute implemented an evidence-based public health initiative of syringe exchange programs throughout New York State mainly in New York City. Syringe exchange programs reduced the transmission of HIV among injection drug users from 54 percent to 6 percent in 20 years. NYSDOH AIDS Institute syringe exchange programs were able to meet the CDC requirement level of reduction of HIV transmission in the target injection use population. The syringe exchange programs incorporate the strategy of harm reduction which is refers to policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce harm associated with the use of drugs with the objective to keep people healthy. Harm reduction services include, HIV /Hepatitis C/STI counseling and testing, coordination with case management, escort services, linkage to care and recovery. CDC states cost per averted HIV infection currently, the lifetime treatment cost of an HIV infection is estimated at \$ 379,668 (in 2010 dollars), therefore prevention intervention is deemed cost-saving if its CE ration is less than \$ 379,668

per infection averted.(HIV Cost-effectiveness CDC 2010). Presently, Long Island has one syringe exchange program to address the heroin crisis in the Nassau-Suffolk region.

*We are urging increase funding to Long Island to address the heroin crisis. Provide an additional increase to the Governor's Budget for HIV, AIDS, STD and Hepatitis C Prevention Programs.*

#### **d) Patient Handling**

Health care workers face a surprising amount of risk working with patients; they suffer more injuries than employees in construction and warehouse. Healthcare employers within the state admit safe patient handling programs are necessary while remaining resistant to change. *Therefore we supports safe patient handling legislation (A 2180C, S1123C, S-6509) that better protects these employees from harm and medical bills.*

#### **e) Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center**

Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center treats seriously emotionally disturbed children of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, who range in age from 9 through 17 and require a structured inpatient program. Located in Dix Hills, Sagamore is operated by New York State's Office of Mental Health (OMH) and is accredited by The Joint Commission.

The children admitted to Sagamore suffer from severe psychiatric disorders, including deep depression, debilitating anxiety, and psychosis. With histories of suicide attempts, self-mutilation, physically explosive outbursts, social isolation, substance abuse, and runaway, these children require intensive and comprehensive treatment.

The New York State Office of Mental Health released its "Regional Centers of Excellence Plan," which calls for the closure of Sagamore's inpatient hospital. The plan reads, "All inpatient services currently provided by Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center will be merged into the Greater New York Children's RCE to be located in Queens and the Bronx." This decision was temporarily reversed but we need to be clear that this hospital should stay open for the benefit of LI children and families.

## **6. POST SANDY REBUILDING**

#### **a) Homeowner Insurance**

Thousands of homeowners struggled and continue to struggle with insurance claims post-Sandy, many of them being underinsured. We would like to see insurance companies explain to homeowners 30 days prior to renewal in plain English what their policies cover, do not cover and what supplemental policies are available to them. This would help ensure that homeowners are better protected financially in the event of another disaster and potentially save CDBG funding available while expediting the recovery process for these homeowners in the future.

#### **b) Expedited Recovery Payments through CDBG-DR**

We do appreciate the NY Rising program releasing funds to the homeowners as fast as possible, and understand the process takes time to write and administer, however, residents are still struggling in their recovery process and would like to see funds flowing faster. A better flow of communication from the State with program updates for the residents is necessary to that they can rebuild their homes and lives now.

#### **c) Community Capacity Building and Assistance for Recoveries**

It is clear that grassroots community groups have been instrumental in the recovery process across the state, and help bridge the disconnect between government, traditional nonprofit organizations and



the needs of the residents. Homeowners are left confused and frustrated through the multiple layers of assistance available and the lack of consistency of information. The grassroots organizations can best reach certain populations, but require the proper tools to do so. A "one-stop-shop" for information (through a web portal and in person) would aid all working in the disaster to have real-time information to the individual problems they face.