

NEW YORK STATE SENATE

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****PRESS RELEASE****

Skoufis Helps Pass Pandemic Relief Legislation

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) and the State Senate passed dozens of bills this week that address a number of issues New Yorkers are facing due to the ongoing pandemic and recovery. The State Legislature returned to Albany this week for a socially-distant session and passed bills focusing on issues ranging from education needs and death benefits, to utility relief and price gouging penalties.

"I was proud to co-sponsor most of these important bills and help deliver some relief to New Yorkers who continue to face challenging times," **said Senator Skoufis**. "My team and I have been on the ground in our district throughout this pandemic and have seen firsthand how much work there is to do in building back stronger while maintaining the public's health. Every day, I hear another heartbreaking story about real-life situations our neighbors are living through; I pledge to continue to bring their voices to Albany and demand that they are turned into action. That's why I voted to extend the Child Victims Act look-back window by one year to support New Yorkers who have been sexually abused; crack down on anyone who price gouges medical supplies; prohibit utility terminations; permit municipalities to allow residents to defer property tax payments; and provide death benefits to the families of many of our lost frontline workers. I know so much more still needs to be done and I won't stop fighting."

Highlights in the legislative package, organized by issue, can be found below:

Access to Services and Benefits:

S8113A: Provides a **further moratorium of 180 days for utility service terminations after the state of emergency is lifted** for any customer unable to pay overdue charges. Utility companies will have 48 hours to reconnect any unduly terminated service.

S8427: Establishes **benefits for public employees who have died as a result of the coronavirus that was contracted in the course of their job duties**, making beneficiaries eligible to receive an accidental death benefit.

S8251B: Permits active **volunteer firefighter service award programs to provide 5 additional points per month**, (or prorated for periods of less than a month) for each month that special emergency response rules were in place restricting firefighter responses to emergency responses and/or restricting the holding of activities for which LOSAP points could be earned due to COVID-19 emergency guidelines.

S8412: Allows the **remote conduct of board meetings for business corporations, not-for-profit corporations and religious corporations** during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

S8182A: Allows licensed **pharmacists to administer a future COVID-19 vaccine** 90 days after its approval by the FDA's Center of Biologics Evaluation and Research.

Protecting New Yorkers:

S7082: Extends the **Child Victims Act look-back window by one year to August 14, 2021**.

S8397A: Establishes **stronger whistleblower protections for health care employees** by expanding the current prohibition on health care employers from penalizing employees if the latter discloses or threatens to disclose activities.

S8189: **Prohibits price gouging of medical supplies during a public health emergency**. The attorney general can impose fees of up to \$25,000 per violation or 3x the gross receipts for the supplies/services.

S8289B: Requires residential **health care facilities to submit an annual pandemic emergency plan** to DOH.

Relief for Taxpayers and Municipalities:

S7996B: Ensures that **schools closing in response to the COVID-19 emergency are not penalized** in their school aid apportionment for the 2019-20 school year, and does not require the exhaustion of unused vacation days.

S8122B: **Extends the application and renewal window for real property tax abatement programs** to July 15, 2020 at local option.

S8243C: Requires **180 days of forbearance for state-backed mortgagors** who demonstrate financial hardship during the NY on PAUSE period.

S8410: Extends the deadline for library construction projects for an additional 12 months for projects to ensure their state aid does not expire as a result of NY on PAUSE-induced delays.

Skoufis and his team remain committed to supporting anyone and everyone who is facing difficulty during this time. Skoufis continues to encourage constituents to reach out to his office at skoufis@nysenate.gov and 845-567-1270 if they need assistance.

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