



Dear neighbors and community,

Happy New Year to you all. As you may be aware, although the legislative session ends in June each year the governor has until December 31st to make a decision on each piece of legislation that we have passed

Now that that window has closed I want to take a moment to walk you through the legislation that passed and was signed into law including summaries of legislation I championed in 2025. Also linked at the bottom of this newsletter is a comprehensive tracker where you can view the full list of bills from the 2025 session, the ones that passed both houses, and those that were signed into law.

While this summary by no means includes a comprehensive list of the hundreds of bills signed into law it gives some key highlights that I believe will be of interest to our communities.

May 2026 bring us all health, balance, safety, and justice.



# Legislative Update

In 2025, the Governor signed into law two of three key pieces of legislation I championed and successfully passed through the legislature.

**The Native Plants Program Act ([A3030-A/S1690-A](#))**, strengthens New York's commitment to biodiversity and sustainable land management. The bill establishes a statewide program to promote the use of native plants in landscaping, restoration, and public projects, recognizing their

essential role in supporting ecosystems and agriculture. New York's native plants have evolved alongside the state's pollinators, birds, and wildlife, forming interdependent relationships that sustain biodiversity. By prioritizing native plants, the State helps rebuild ecological systems and restore food sources for insect and plant pollinators, helping to reverse dangerous downward population trends. Alongside ecological benefits, native plants provide measurable environmental advantages. They require less water and fewer chemical inputs than non-native species, stabilize slopes and streambanks to prevent erosion, reduce nutrient runoff into waterways, enrich soil organic matter, and filter pollutants from air, soil, and water. Their use helps mitigate the spread of invasive species and supports pollinators that are critical to New York's agricultural economy. To read the full press release [click here](#).

**The Sex Worker Immunity Act (A1029-B/S3967-B)**, is landmark legislation that represents a major step forward for public safety, survivor-centered justice, and evidence-based policy in New York State.

The law allows survivors of trafficking and consensual adult sex workers to report crimes or seek medical care without fear of arrest. By removing this barrier, the law enables survivors and witnesses of violence, including trafficking and assault, to safely seek help, cooperate with law enforcement, and access critical health services. This law recognizes a simple, life-saving reality that people who experience violence must be able to report it without fear of arrest. Survivors of trafficking and consensual adult sex workers are often targeted precisely because perpetrators believe they will remain silent. When fear of prosecution keeps victims from coming forward, violent actors are shielded and harm continues. We have seen the tragic consequences of this dynamic here in New York, including the case of the Long Island Serial Killer, where sex workers were deliberately preyed upon and critical information went unreported for years. This common sense law provides limited immunity so victims can report crime or seek health care, strengthening investigations of serious offenses like sexual assault, trafficking, and homicide, while removing long-standing barriers to justice. This bill passed with a unanimous bipartisan vote in both houses. To read the full press release [click here](#).

**The Open Water Data Act (A5254/1211)**, was vetoed by the Governor on December 19th. The veto note simply stated fiscal considerations. Given the environmental importance of this bill, which was passed with a unanimous bipartisan vote in both houses, I will be prioritizing re-passage of the bill in the 2026 session. New York's lakes are not just scenic assets, they are economic and public-health infrastructure. In the Finger Lakes, clean water underpins a regional economy that generates billions of dollars annually, sustaining agritourism, wineries, farms, hospitality, outdoor recreation, and the small businesses that depend on the health and reputation of these lakes. Cayuga Lake alone supports hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic activity and serves as a primary drinking water source for tens of thousands of residents across multiple municipalities. Protecting

these waters for the long term requires more than good intentions, it requires reliable, accessible data. Today, water data in New York is fragmented across agencies and platforms, often difficult to integrate, and in many cases unavailable to the public. When information is scattered or inaccessible, it weakens our ability to make sound decisions that protect public health, environmental integrity, and economic resilience. This legislation responds by directing key state agencies, including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Department of Health, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York State Canal Corporation, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and the Public Service Commission, to work together to align New York’s water data systems. The bill establishes shared standards, creates a single publicly accessible data platform, incorporates citizen science, coordinates with broader data efforts, and requires a needs assessment to identify critical data and funding gaps for effective long-term water management.



### **The 2025 Legislative Session: Key Bills Signed Into Law**

Each session, the New York State Legislature considers a large slate of bills. About 96% of bills “die” in committee by never being put on a committee agenda for a vote. These bills never reach the legislative floor. Bills can be amended as they pass through the relevant committees on their journey to the floor, but both chambers must pass identical versions for a bill to be considered fully “passed” in a given legislative session. Approximately 6,600 bills were introduced in 2025 with

identical bills in both the Assembly and the Senate this year to coordinate passage of the bills in both houses simultaneously. Over 6,700 additional bills were introduced in either the Assembly or Senate without identical companion bills in the other house. Many of these ultimately had companion bills as legislators negotiated language between the houses. Of these more than 14,000 bills, the Legislature passed 856 bills through both houses that were eventually sent to Governor Kathy Hochul.

As the year came to a close there were two outstanding bills left unsigned. Governor Hochul is opting to slow the process on a bill that would reorganize judicial districts in Onondaga, Monroe, and Erie counties. Rather than immediately approving or rejecting it, she is invoking a constitutional provision that allows her additional time, extending the decision into the new year while she considers the implications. She used the same provision to extend the deadline for signing the Medical Aid in Dying legislation though she has [committed to signing](#) pending amendments to the bill.

The Governor vetoed 140 bills in 2025, one of the highest percent of vetoes in recent years with almost half of the veto notes citing fiscal reasons. The following are highlights of legislation signed into law in 2025:

### **Public health and safety**

Social Media Mental Health Warning Labels for Addictive Feeds ([A5346/S4505](#)) – This law requires large social media platforms to place clear warning labels on features designed to keep users scrolling, such as infinite scroll, autoplay, and algorithm-driven feeds. The warnings must explain that excessive use can negatively affect mental health, especially for children and teens. The goal is not to ban social media, but to make the risks visible, similar to nutrition or tobacco warnings, so users and families can make more informed choices. Platforms that fail to comply may face civil penalties.

Kratom Sales Restricted to Age 21+ ([A2340A/S4552A](#)) – This law makes it illegal to sell kratom products to anyone under the age of 21. Kratom is an herbal substance that can have stimulant-like or opioid-like effects depending on dose. The law aims to reduce youth exposure while allowing adults to make informed decisions.

Kratom Labeling and Ingredient Disclosure Requirements ([A5852A/S8285](#)) – This law requires kratom products sold in New York to clearly list ingredients and include warning labels describing potential health risks and interactions. Prior to this law, consumers often had little information about what they were ingesting. The law improves transparency and consumer safety without banning the product.

### **Economic fairness and utility reform**

Repeal of the “100-Foot Rule” Gas Hookup Subsidy (A8888/S8417) – For decades, existing gas customers were required to subsidize the first 100 feet of gas line installation for new buildings, meaning renters and homeowners paid higher utility bills to cover infrastructure they did not benefit from. This law ends that subsidy and requires developers or property owners requesting new gas hookups to pay the full cost themselves. The change is expected to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars over time, reduce upward pressure on utility bills, and eliminate a hidden cost that disproportionately affected low-income households, while also removing incentives to expand fossil fuel infrastructure.

### **Emerging technology regulation**

Responsible AI Safety and Education Act (RAISE Act) (A6453B/S6953B) – This law establishes a state-level oversight framework for advanced artificial intelligence systems. It applies to developers of large, powerful AI models and requires them to publish safety and transparency plans explaining how risks such as bias, misinformation, or misuse are identified and mitigated. Developers must also report serious AI-related incidents to the state within a defined timeframe. The law creates an oversight function to monitor compliance and issue public reports, ensuring AI development proceeds responsibly and transparently.

### **Criminal justice accountability and evidence processes**

Prison Safety, Transparency, and Accountability Omnibus (A8871/S8415) – This omnibus law is an important first step toward addressing the documented rise in violence against people incarcerated in New York prisons, including deaths such as the killings of Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi, by strengthening transparency, independent oversight, and accountability when serious harm or death occurs in custody. While accountability alone cannot resolve the systemic drivers of violence inside prisons, it is a necessary foundation to ensure violence is fully documented, independently investigated, and no longer hidden from families or the public.

- **Timely access to video after a death involving staff:** The law requires facilities to quickly provide relevant video footage to the Attorney General’s Office of Special Investigation so investigations are not delayed or compromised.
- **Expanded camera coverage and preservation:** The law requires broader audio and video surveillance in most non-private areas, reduces blind spots, and ensures footage is retained long enough for oversight and investigations.
- **Prompt family notification and public disclosure:** Families and designated representatives must be notified quickly after a death in custody, followed by public notice.

- Autopsy transparency (Terry Cooper Autopsy Accountability provisions): Autopsy reports must include supporting materials, such as photographs and post-mortem imaging, to reduce unanswered questions.
- Statewide study of deaths in custody: The law directs a data-driven review of deaths in New York correctional facilities to identify patterns and prevention strategies.
- Expanded independent oversight: The law strengthens the State Commission of Correction's structure and authority.
- Improved access for independent monitors: The Correctional Association is granted stronger access to facilities and records with limited advance notice.
- Greater transparency around investigations: Additional reporting is required on complaints and investigations handled by the Attorney General's Office of Special Investigation.
- Clarifying conflicts in investigations: Procedures are created to address conflicts when the Attorney General's office is both defending state employees and investigating misconduct.
- Extended time to bring civil claims: Certain statutes of limitation are tolled for people harmed while incarcerated, recognizing barriers to accessing the courts.

**Sexual Offense Evidence Tracking Improvements ([A1970A/S5225A](#))** – This law strengthens how sexual assault evidence is handled from the moment it is collected to when it is tested, so evidence does not sit untracked, get lost, or fall through bureaucratic gaps. When a survivor goes to a hospital after a sexual assault, clinicians may collect a sexual assault forensic exam kit, often called a rape kit, which contains items such as swabs, clothing, and documentation used to preserve physical evidence. This law makes hospitals a required part of the statewide evidence-tracking system, sets clear timelines for notifying law enforcement and retrieving kits (with survivor consent), and ensures every transfer, hospital to law enforcement to crime lab, is logged. For survivors, this means transparency, accountability, and confidence that evidence has not been forgotten or mishandled.

### **Child protection policy shifts**

**Ending Anonymous Child Protective Services Hotline Reports ([A66A/S550A](#))** – This law requires callers to provide identifying information when making child abuse or maltreatment reports, while maintaining confidentiality protections. The goal is to reduce malicious or knowingly false reports that disrupt families and traumatize children, while preserving strong protections for good-faith reporters.

### **Child welfare and foster care dignity**

Providing Proper Luggage for Youth in Foster Care (A5434/S3781) – This law requires that children in foster care be provided appropriate luggage for their belongings. It ends the degrading practice of transporting children’s possessions in trash bags and promotes dignity, stability, and respect.

### **Environmental health and consumer protection**

Ban on Toxic Chemicals in Menstrual Products (A1502/S1548) – This law prohibits the sale of menstrual products containing certain harmful substances, including PFAS, specific heavy metals, certain parabens, and formaldehyde. It protects consumers from unknowingly being exposed to toxic chemicals through products used internally or against highly absorbent body tissue.

### **Environmental conservation**

Horseshoe Crab Protection Act (A4997/S4289) – prohibits both commercial and biomedical harvesting of horseshoe crabs in New York, ending a practice that is both inhumane and scientifically unnecessary. Horseshoe crabs are routinely captured, transported, and bled while still alive for their blue blood to produce Limulus Amebocyte Lysate, a process long characterized as non-lethal but shown through peer-reviewed research to cause significant mortality, long-term physiological stress, disorientation, reduced spawning, and impaired immune function among survivors. These harms contribute directly to population decline and undermine coastal ecosystems that depend on horseshoe crabs as a keystone species, particularly migratory shorebirds whose survival hinges on access to horseshoe crab eggs. Critically, the continuation of biomedical bleeding is no longer justified, as fully validated synthetic alternatives, including recombinant Factor C testing, are already in use, offer equal or superior reliability, reduce supply chain risk, and eliminate animal suffering altogether.

### **Housing affordability, civil rights, and dignity**

Senior Property Tax Relief Expansion Authority (A3698A/S5175A) – This law is separate from the statewide STAR school tax exemption and expands a different, existing senior property tax relief program. New York already allows local governments to offer a Senior Citizens Property Tax Exemption, which reduces the taxable assessed value of a senior’s home based on income, historically capped at lower exemption levels in many communities. This law increases the maximum exemption local governments are allowed to offer, permitting municipalities, counties, school districts, and villages to exempt up to 65 percent of a senior homeowner's assessed value if the senior meets age and income eligibility requirements. Importantly, the law does not automatically change anyone's taxes statewide. Instead, it gives local governments the legal authority to adopt higher exemptions if they choose.

For seniors who already receive STAR, this exemption can be layered on top, meaning eligible homeowners may benefit from both STAR relief and an expanded senior exemption, significantly

reducing property tax bills. The law gives communities a stronger tool to help seniors on fixed incomes remain in their homes as housing costs and property taxes rise.

Removal of Discriminatory Covenants from Property Deeds (A1820A/S3178A) – This law requires racist or otherwise discriminatory restrictive covenants to be removed from property deeds during real estate transactions. A covenant is a condition or rule written into a property deed that historically dictated who could buy, live in, or use a property, often based on race, religion, or ethnicity. Although these discriminatory covenants have been illegal and unenforceable for decades, they still appear in many property records and continue to cause harm by embedding discriminatory language in legal documents. This law ensures that when a property is sold or transferred, that language is formally removed so it is no longer carried forward in public records.

### **Survivor economic security and consumer protection**

Coerced Debt Protections for Survivors of Abuse (A3038B/S1353B) – This law creates a legal process allowing survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, or economic abuse to stop creditors from enforcing debts that were forced on them through fraud, threats, coercion, or identity theft, and gives survivors a clear right to seek relief.

[Here is a link with the full list of all bills signed into law this year.](#)



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