

AN UPDATE FROM OSTROFF ASSOCIATES

by Chris Bombardier, Managing Director, Ostroff Associates



This legislative session ushered in significant political change in Albany. With the exception of a brief period in 2009 when the Democrats were in the majority, the Senate had been in Republican control since 1965. That changed in last year's elections.

Five Republican senators retired in 2018: John Bonacic, Tom Croci, John DeFrancisco, Bill Larkin and Kathy Marchione. That same year, six of the eight members of the Independent Democratic Caucus (IDC), a group that formed their own caucus and allowed Republicans to remain in the majority, lost their elections. This included the IDC leader, Jeff Klein, along with Tony Avella, Marisol Alcantara, Jesse Hamilton and Jose Peralta (Peralta passed away from an illness shortly after the elections).

Democrats also picked up some surprising wins on Long Island and the Hudson Valley by defeating incumbents Carl Marcellino, Kemp Hannon, Marty Golden, Terrence Murphy and Elaine Phillips.

As a result, the Democrats now firmly control the Senate with 40 of the 63 seats. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, a senator from Yonkers, is the new majority leader. Mike Gianaris from Queens is the deputy leader. Liz Krueger of Manhattan chairs the powerful Finance Committee and Tim Kennedy from Buffalo chairs the Transportation Committee.

Aside from the Senate changes, we also saw a change in the Assembly that impacts our industry. Longtime chairman of the Assembly Transportation Committee David Gantt was replaced by Bill Magnarelli, a well-regarded legislator from Syracuse.

These changes have challenged a lot of industries in New York. Forty

percent of senators are new (in a normal election there are usually one or two new members) along with hundreds of staff and key decision-makers.

For the trucking industry, the change means a few things. First, there are now only four Democratic senators from north of Westchester County, generally areas more sensitive to trucking needs. Second, we have to educate a lot of people about the importance of trucking and the policy issues related to our industry. Third, we have to identify legislators who can advocate for us.

We made progress this year, but more still needs to be done. TANY President Kendra Hems and I are working on a strategy for next year's session that includes more industry engagement and policy education.

Here is a brief summary of some of our important issues:

Congestion Pricing: The state budget included congestion pricing for any vehicles traveling in the congestion zone identified as 60th street south in Manhattan, excluding the FDR and 9A/West Side Highway. The implementation, including fees and exemptions, was left to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. We are spearheading a coalition that will advocate for the industry during this process.

Young Driver Licensing: Recognizing the driver shortage, we are advocating for legislation that would create a pilot program for 18-20-year-olds. We secured the support of Senator Kennedy, the

new transportation committee chairman, but there was not enough time in the legislative session to reconcile his legislation with the Assembly. This will be a priority next year.

Loss of Consciousness: Legislation was passed that would require the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles to deny or suspend a license if there was evidence or admission that the driver suffered from loss of consciousness while behind the wheel. Loss of consciousness is considered to be a condition such as narcolepsy, syncope, cataplexy or epilepsy. We are encouraging a veto of this legislation because regulations already exist to address this issue.

State Transportation Plan: This legislation requires the commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation to submit to the governor and the legislature a 20-year intermodal and a five-year capital transportation plan with defined projects. We supported this legislation.

Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act: This was a major piece of environmental legislation that passed both houses. It mandates that the state's electric sector be 100 percent carbon free by 2040 and greenhouse gas emissions be reduced to 15 percent of 1990 levels by 2050. A 22-member council will be created to form a plan for achieving these standards. We will work with the council to mitigate the impact to trucking.

There are dozens of other bills that we will again be following closely next session. We look forward to working with you on these important issues.

For information on TANY's legislative initiatives, visit www.nytrucks.org.

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Trucking Association
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