

**MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK'S
2019 PHYSICIAN ADVOCACY DAY**

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Senator Gustavo Rivera

State Senator Gustavo Rivera has represented the 33rd Senate District in the Bronx since November of 2010. The 33rd Senate District includes the neighborhoods of Kingsbridge Heights, East Tremont, Crotona Park, Fordham, Mount Hope, Belmont, Van Nest, Claremont, and Morris Park.



In 2018, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins appointed Senator Rivera as the Chair of the New York State Senate's Health Committee. As the Chair, Senator Rivera's goal is to collaborate with his colleagues, stakeholders, and constituents to improve health outcomes, increase access to coverage, and ensure a financially viable system for the 20 million New Yorkers he proudly serves.

Prior to his appointment to Chair, Senator Rivera served as the ranking member of the Senate Health Committee for six years. As a sitting member of the committee, Senator Rivera passed three laws to ban smoking around schools, afterschools, and libraries, and has been a champion of public health and harm reduction policies. In March 2017, he became the main sponsor of the "New York Health Act," an innovative bill to create a single payer health system in New York State.

Senator Rivera has also championed and empowered Latino communities across New York State and the United States. In 2018, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) elected Senator Rivera to serve an initial three-year term on the nonpartisan organization's 35-member Board of Directors. Senator Rivera has also served as a mentor for the annual Model State Senate program, "Somos El Futuro", sponsored by CUNY, SUNY, the NY State Assembly, and the Puerto Rican Hispanic Task Force.

Gustavo was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico. In 1998, Gustavo graduated from the University of Puerto Rico and moved to New York to begin a doctoral program in political science at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. A proud Bronxite, he has lived in Kingsbridge Heights for almost 20 years.

Senator Neil Breslin

Neil David Breslin is currently serving as New York State Senator representing the 44th District, which consists of parts of Albany County and parts of Rensselaer County. Born as one of six children, Neil is a lifelong resident of Albany.



Neil attended Fordham College from which he graduated in 1964 with a BS degree in Political Science. While in law school at the University of Toledo, he was named the editor-in-chief of the Law Review. Upon graduation from law school, Neil became an associate in the firm of Garry Cahill & Edmunds and two years later became a partner in a new firm entitled Garry, Cahill, Edmunds & Breslin. In 1981, Neil formed a partnership with his two brothers, Michael and Thomas. Currently, Neil practices law as "of counsel" to the firm of Barclay Damon, LLP.

Neil has been a community leader for many years. His involvement in civic and social areas in Albany includes 15 years as a board member of Arbor House, a residence facility for women in need. He also served as president of Arbor House for a period of seven years. Neil has been the attorney for St. Anne's Institute in Albany and has performed work for Hospitality House, the International Center and Hope House, a drug treatment facility. Further, Neil was Vice President of the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless from 1994 to 1998.

An active member of the New York State Bar Association, Neil has served as a lecturer on real estate law; editor of the newsletter of the New York State Bar Association General Practice of Law Section from 1980-

1984; member of the Executive Committee of the General Practice of Law Section from 1980-1985 and from 1989-1998; chairperson of the General Practice of Law Section from 1993-1994; and member of the House of Delegates of the New York State Bar Association from 1992-1994. Additionally, he has been a member of the Character and Fitness Committee of the Appellate Division, Third Department and was also chairman of the Grievance Committee for the Albany County Bar Association from 1985-1993.

Neil is the former and longest serving President of the National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) and is the former Chair of the State/Federal Relations Committee. In 2014, he received the Distinguished Leadership Award given by the Autism Society of the Greater Capital Region. In 2015, he was named a Champion in Compassion, an award given by the Homeless and Travelers Aid Society. Most recently, in 2017, he received the Centennial Medallion from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany as well as the CWA Solidarity Award.

Assemblyman Richard Gottfried

Richard N. Gottfried represents the 75th Assembly District. He is chair of the Assembly Health Committee since 1987. He is a leading state health policy-maker not only in New York but also nationally.



He was a major architect of New York's landmark managed care reforms, and is continuing to fight for stronger protections for consumers and health care providers, and public support for universal access to quality, affordable health care. Dick champions many issue on behalf of the medical community including protections for statements made during peer review, legislation to allow physicians to collectively negotiate on quality of care and rate of payment and was a strong supporter of legislation to protect access to out of network providers.

Gottfried has been the leading proponent of patient autonomy, especially in end-of-life care, and reproductive freedom. He sponsors the N.Y. Health bill to create a publicly funded single-payer health coverage plan for NYS.

Mr. Gottfried was first elected to the Assembly in 1970. He was born in New York City in 1947. He is a graduate of Stuyvesant High School, Cornell University (BA, 1968), and Columbia Law School (JD, 1973).

Assemblyman Kevin Cahill

As the representative of the 103rd Assembly District, Assembly member Kevin Cahill stands up for the constituents and organizations in the region. A lifelong resident of Kingston, Mr. Cahill has close ties to the community and a vested interest in local issues. His passion for the beautiful, historic area and his determination to fight for the residents are what make Kevin Cahill a strong leader.



Kevin Cahill's experience in the Ulster County Legislature as minority leader led him to the State Assembly in 1992, where he has become a proven leader on civil rights, labor and women's issues and has been on the forefront in the struggle to provide New Yorkers with quality, affordable healthcare.

When faced with the threat of State mandated closure for one or more hospitals in the region, the Assemblymember played an instrumental role in facilitating the affiliation of Benedictine, Kingston and Margaretville Hospitals. He successfully advocated for more than \$47 million in state grants that were critical to the success of the merger, which has allowed the institutions to move together into the 21st Century and improve the standard of care and delivery of services in the Hudson Valley.

Kevin Cahill is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz and Albany Law School. He has worked as an attorney and director of a Medicare health plan and uses this experience to better serve the people of his district and all citizens of New York State.

Senate Minority Leader John Flanagan

John J. Flanagan represents the Second Senate District, which includes the Town of Smithtown and portions of the Towns of Brookhaven and Huntington. He was first elected to the Senate in 2002 and was elected by his colleagues to serve as Temporary President and Majority Leader of the Senate in 2015.



Prior to becoming Minority Leader, Senator Flanagan served as the Chairman of the Committee on Education. During his time in the Senate, he has constantly fought to provide tax relief to New Yorkers and small business owners. His efforts have included enacting a property tax cap, cutting personal income taxes and repealing the MTA payroll tax for 80 percent of businesses.

Senator Flanagan has also persistently fought for budget reforms to improve New York's financial health, strived to ensure that schools throughout the state receive their fair share of state aid and is an outspoken supporter of a state spending cap to provide New York with economic stability.

Senator Flanagan has helped numerous charitable and civic organizations by enacting legislation in support of their causes. He was the prime sponsor of legislation to provide women with critically important information about breast density to assist in the fight against breast cancer. He is also an outspoken leader in the effort to encourage more New York residents to register as organ donors.

Senator Flanagan, who is a proud father of three, is honored to be following the path of his father, the late John Flanagan, who served in the New York State Assembly from 1972 to 1986.

Troy Oechsner, Deputy Superintendent for Health, NYS Department of Financial Services

As the Deputy Superintendent for Health, Mr. Oechsner's responsibilities include the licensing, examination and regulation of all health insurers and related entities. Mr. Oechsner's is also an adjunct professor at Albany Law School, where he has taught the academic component of a clinical placement program in health law since 2000.



Before joining the Department, Mr. Oechsner's spent almost 14 years with the Office of the Attorney General of New York. Since August 2000, he served in the Health Care Bureau, where he was Deputy Bureau Chief. Mr. Oechsner's directed litigation against health plans, drug manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers, doctors and hospitals for illegal and deceptive business practices. He also had responsibility for various consumer initiatives, including a consumer helpline that advocated for consumers and providers in health care disputes with insurers.

A cum laude graduate of the State University of New York at Plattsburgh with a BA degree in history, Mr. Oechsner earned his JD, also cum laude, from the Buffalo Law School at SUNY. There he received the Faculty Achievement Award, was articles editor of the Buffalo Law Review, and editor of "In the Public Interest", an alternative law review.