

Liz Krueger

New York State Senate | 28th District



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Message from Liz...

The legislative session ended in late June. It was a particularly uninspiring finish in the context of what our state needs to do to protect New Yorkers from the damaging policies of the Trump administration, as well as the continued need to address ethics issues in our own state government. The most significant thing we accomplished at the end of session was a two-year extension of mayoral control of New York City schools, and even getting that done proved a struggle, with Governor Cuomo calling us back into an extraordinary session after the regular session had ended without dealing with this basic issue.

The list of what didn't get accomplished is much longer. The Assembly passed a number of measures that could have put New York at the forefront of progressive responses to the Trump agenda, including the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, the New York Liberty Act, the Dream Act, the New York Health Act, and the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act. However, the Republican/IDC Majority Coalition refused to allow votes on any of these bills in the Senate.

The IDC, or Independent Democratic Conference, claim their alliance with the Republicans will help advance a progressive agenda, and say they want to "call the roll" on these bills. But the only way you can call the roll is if you bring the bills to the floor for a vote, and the Majority Coalition has refused to do that. In failing to bring these bills to the floor and working to pass them, the IDC and their Republican partners have failed to protect a woman's right to choose. They have failed to protect immigrants. They have failed to protect access to healthcare. And they have failed to protect our environment and address climate change.

Resisting the Trump agenda is critical, but it is hardly the only piece of unfinished business in Albany. The need for ethics and election reform is not new but seems to always drop from the agenda as the session moves along. As part of his executive budget released in January, the Governor proposed a number of worthy measures to reduce the potential for conflicts of interest among legislators and government officials, limit outside income for legislators, improve oversight of state contracting, open up our voting procedures to encourage more public participation, and reform our campaign finance laws to reduce the impact of big money on elections. None of these made it into the final budget, and at the time Governor Cuomo indicated that policy issues could be dealt with after the budget was done. I was hardly surprised when that did not happen but it represents yet another failure of Albany leadership to address the concerns of New Yorkers.

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POLICY SPOTLIGHT

Maternal Depression Treatment

I am happy to report that both houses of the legislature passed a bill I carry with Assemblymember Diana Richardson (S4000/A8308) that would improve treatment options for women diagnosed with maternal depression.

Having a baby can be an incredible and rewarding experience for moms and families, but it is also a very challenging time. 1 in 10 new mothers will experience symptoms of maternal depression, and too many of them will suffer in silence. This bill will improve access to treatment so that women can get the resources they need to overcome maternal depression.

S4000/A8308 requires the creation of a centralized list of available community resources, peer support groups, and providers who treat maternal depression, which would help providers conducting screenings make appropriate referrals and get more women access to treatment. The bill also requires the state to invest in maternal depression treatment resources including strengthening and expanding a statewide hotline, encouraging peer support and telemedicine options, and improving the capacity of referral networks.

In 2014, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried and I sponsored legislation that passed unanimously in both houses of the Legislature and was signed into law by Governor Cuomo, to provide education and promote screening and treatment-referrals for maternal depression. Maternal depression includes a range of perinatal mood disorders, emotional and psychological reactions a woman may experience during pregnancy or up to a year after childbirth. Symptoms can include feelings of despair or guilt, sadness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, changes in appetite, and thoughts of suicide or of harming the baby. Maternal depression includes prenatal depression, “baby blues,” postpartum anxiety, postpartum depression, and postpartum psychosis. The latter is the most severe of these conditions, often including hallucinations and delusions, and results in infanticide and suicide rates of four and five percent, respectively.

Maternal depression affects a significant portion of pregnant women and new mothers; in fact, it is one of the most common medical complications women may experience during and after pregnancy. Each year, approximately 10 to 15 percent of new mothers develop postpartum depression, while 50 to 80 percent of new mothers will experience “baby blues.” A small but significant number – about 0.1 to 0.2 percent of new mothers – develop symptoms serious enough to be considered postpartum psychosis.

Maternal depression can lead to significant negative consequences for those affected and their families and children if left untreated. However, treatment for maternal depression has an 80 to 90 percent success rate. Early diagnosis and treatment significantly improve prognoses. This legislation should be delivered to the Governor for his review in the near future and I am hopeful that he will sign it.

*If you think you or someone you know might be suffering from maternal depression, there is a wonderful new facility in my district -- The **Motherhood Center** provides supportive services for new and expecting moms, including a range of treatment options for women suffering from perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs.) P (212) 335-0034 web: themothorhoodcenter.com*

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Rent Guidelines Board Freezes Rent for 1-Year Rent Stabilized Leases:

Mental Wellness: A Forum on Healthy Aging on July 20th:

On Thursday, July 20 from 6-8PM, I am joining Weill Cornell Medicine and New York-Presbyterian in hosting an event titled “Mental Wellness: A Forum on Healthy Aging.” Mental illness is prevalent in older adults, but it does not have to be part of the normal aging process. Identifying ways to keep older adults mentally well is critically important, and includes connecting individuals to care when needed.

I will be moderating a discussion with Mark Lachs, MD, MPH, Director of Geriatrics at NewYork-Presbyterian, Jo Anne Sirey, PhD, Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medicine, and Stacy Torres, PhD, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Albany.

The event will take place at Weill Cornell Medicine, Uris Auditorium, 1300 York Avenue between 68th and 68th Streets. RSVP at <http://tinyurl.com/mentalwellnessforum> or by calling 212-490-9535.

Meeting on Renovations of 30th Street Men’s Shelter on June 17th:

On Monday, June 17th, the NYC Department of Homeless Services is co-hosting a meeting with local elected officials to discuss upcoming renovations of the 30th Street Men’s Shelter. As part of the renovations, there will be opportunities to open a number of interior and exterior spaces on the site to the general public. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the planned renovations, provide feedback on the redevelopment of public areas, and brainstorm opportunities for shared community use.

There will be a short presentation by Marvel Architects of the redesign plans, feedback from elected officials, and smaller breakout sessions to facilitate brainstorming. Sign-in begins at 6pm, and the meeting will begin at 6:30pm. The meeting will take place at 400 East 30th street, courtyard by the theater (a rain date may be announced if there is inclement weather)

Please RSVP to <http://bit.ly/2ubj711>, as there are a limited number of seats.

SCHE/DHE Income Limits Raised:

I am happy to report that the Senior Citizen Homeowners’ Exemption (SCHE) and Disabled Homeowners’ Exemption (DHE) programs will be available to more people if the Governor signs recently passed legislation and the city enacts authorizing legislation. This legislation raises the SCHE/DHE income eligibility limits from \$37,399 to \$50,000. SCHE/DHE can reduce assessed property values for primary residents by between five and fifty percent, depending on income.

If your income is below \$50,000 and you lost your benefit because your income is over the current limit, the Department of Finance is encouraging people to submit renewal applications in anticipation of action by the Governor and city allowing the increase. I am hopeful the Governor and Mayor will sign this bill into law soon. Please note that it is retroactive to July 1st, 2017. Applications can be found at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/finance/benefits/property-benefit-forms/benefits-forms-property-owners.page>.

Free Summer Meals Program for Children:

Approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers, including 429,000 children, live in households that cannot afford enough food. For many of those kids, the meals they receive at school are an important factor in fighting hunger, but over the summer they may lose access to the school breakfasts and lunches they rely on during the school year. Only about 1 in 4 children in New York City who normally eat a free or reduced priced lunch during the school year participate in the USDA's FREE Summer Food Service Program (or Summer Meals). With children out of school, many are missing out on the healthy, affordable meals provided there. As a result, family expenditures increase.

Meals sites will offer breakfast to those under age 18 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. and lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The following sites will be offering meals in my Senate District:

Samuel Seabury Playground, 142 East 96th Street (b/t Lexington Avenue and Third Avenue)
John Jay Pool, East 77th Street and Cherokee Place (b/t York Avenue and FDR Drive)
St. Catherine's Playground, First Avenue b/t 67th and 68th Streets.

Free Housing Legal Clinics:

Trinity Church is partnering with Housing Court Answers and Mobilization for Justice (formerly MFY Legal Services) to provide free workshops for New York City residents without legal representation in housing court. These free workshops will cover topics such as termination hearings, getting repairs, rent regulations and more. Pro-bono legal advice will be also be available on certain dates. The clinics will take place Mondays July 17th to August 28th form 3-5 p.m. at the Trinity Parich Center, 2 Rector Street. Topics will be:

July 17 | Overview of Housing Court
July 24 | NYCHA Termination Hearings
July 31 | Getting Repairs*
August 7 | Rental Arrears Assistance programs
August 14 | Holdover Cases*
August 21 | Housing Court Stipulations and orders to show cause
August 28 | Rent Stabilized Tenants' Rights*
*Attorney will be available for questions

For more information contact Andrew Kumfer at AKumfer@trinitywallstreet.org. No RSVP Required.

Free Civics Classes and Financial Assistance for Naturalization Applicants:

The New-York Historical Society offers FREE classes for permanent residents to prepare for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization exam. The 33-hour interactive program covers all 100 questions and includes preparation for the naturalization interview. For more information, visit: <http://www.nyhistory.org/education/citizenship-project>

Courses Start This Summer!

July 15 – August 12
Saturdays, 8:30 am – 5 pm

July 24 – September 20

Mondays and Wednesdays, 6 – 8 pm

July 25 – September 19

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6 – 8 pm

August 12 – September 9

Saturdays, 8:30 am – 5 pm

September 6 – October 4

Wednesdays and Fridays, 9 am – 1 pm

All applicants must attend a mandatory information session before registering for classes.

Immigrant New Yorkers who are going through the naturalization process may also apply to have their federal application fees waived. Up to 1500 applicants will be chosen by lottery through the NaturalizeNY initiative. For more information, go to <http://www.naturalizeny.org/>.

Upcoming Pet Adoption Events:

Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) is sponsoring several Pet Adoption events around the district. Upcoming dates and locations are:

Saturday, July 29, 11-3PM – Dogs only

Biscuits & Bath Sutton Place, 1064 1st Avenue at East 58th Street

Upcoming events are also listed at <http://nycacc.org/Events.htm>.

Legal Advocacy Clinics At Lenox Hill Neighborhood House:

The Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Legal Advocacy Center Offers assistance on a number of different issues. Here is a list of their ongoing programs and clinics:

- SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) Clinics: Wednesdays from 10am to 1pm at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street. First come, first served. Bring proof of identity, income information, utility bill, proof of housing costs, information on any dependents and if you are 60 or over or on SSI/SSD, information on medical costs. For more information, call [212-218-0431](tel:212-218-0431).
- SCRIE Clinics: call [212-218-0503 ext. 6](tel:212-218-0503) for assistance in applying or recertifying for the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program. The SCRIE clinic is open to tenants city-wide. Please note that due to the volume of calls, it sometimes takes up to two weeks for staff to respond to messages.
- Eviction Prevention: Walk-in clinic, every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month, from 10am to 1pm at 331 East 70th Street, for tenants who live, work, or go to school on Manhattan's East Side above 59th Street and on Roosevelt Island.
- End-of-Life Planning/Advance Directives: volunteer attorneys may be able to assist you with one-on-one counseling and individualized drafting of Advance Directives including Health Care Proxies, Living Wills, Powers of Attorney, and simple, low-asset Wills. If you are interested in being screened for a possible appointment, call the intake hotline at [212-218-0503 ext 4](tel:212-218-0503).
- Health Care Access/Medicare/Medicaid: call [212-218-0503 ext 3](tel:212-218-0503). Find out about Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid home care, Medicare Part D, Medicaid Spend-down, EPIC and if you are eligible for Medicaid.
- Health Insurance Enrollment: call [212-218-0432](tel:212-218-0432). Assistance with finding and enrolling in an affordable health insurance plan.

VOLS Legal Clinics for Low-Income Residents Over Age 60:

The Volunteers of Legal Services (VOLS) Elderly Project provides pro-bono legal services to low-income people over age 60 who live in Manhattan. VOLS conducts legal clinics each month at senior centers where seniors can discuss their legal concerns in confidence, receive legal advice and, where appropriate, obtain referrals to a volunteer lawyer for representation. Areas of legal assistance include wills, medical directives, powers of attorney, housing, consumer matters and Medicaid. Over 150 lawyers serve on their Elderly Project volunteer attorney roster.

Burden Center for the Aging, 1484 First Avenue (between 77th & 78th Streets) — 2 pm — July 28, August 11. Call Margaret Reiff at 212-879-7400, ext. 204 for information.

Stanley Isaacs Senior Center, 415 East 93rd Street (east of 1st Avenue) — 10 am — third Friday of each month (July 21, August 18). Call Khristel Simmons at 212-360-7620 ext, 158 for information.

Encore Community Services Senior Center, St. Malachy's Church - 239 West 49th Street (between Broadway and 8th Avenue) — 10 am — July 27, August 28. Call Narobe Arias at 212-581-2910, ext 125 for information.

Metrocard Bus and Van Schedule:

The MTA offers MetroCard-related services throughout New York City through mobile buses and vans. Buses provide a full range of services, including applying for or refilling a Reduced-Fare MetroCard, buying or refilling a regular MetroCard, or getting answers to a MetroCard-related question. Vans sell Unlimited Ride MetroCards and Pay-Per-Ride MetroCards, and they refill MetroCards and Reduced-Fare MetroCards. Buses and vans will be in my district on the following dates and locations:

- July 11, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- July 11, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- July 11, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- July 19, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- July 19, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- July 19, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- July 20, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- July 20, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- July 20 21, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
- July 24, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- July 24, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- July 24, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- August 2, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
- August 2, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- August 2, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- August 3, 7 – 9 am, 91 Street and York Avenue - Van
- August 3, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- August 3, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- August 4, 9 - 10 am, 57 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
- August 4, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 Street and 3 Avenue – Van
- August 4, 12:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street and 1 Avenue – Van

The full mobile MetroCard schedule is available at <http://mta.info/metrocard/mms.htm>. Please note that MetroCard buses and vans do not take credit cards.