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New York State Senate | 28th District



December 2018

Message from Liz...

Later this month I will join my Senate Democratic colleagues in a two-day retreat to discuss the upcoming legislative session. I think it is safe to say it is an exciting time for us all. I am anxious to sit down with my colleagues – both the ones I have been working with and the 15 new members of my conference – and work with them on developing a legislative agenda. This will be a chance to address priorities of mine that have long been stalled in Albany such as the Reproductive Health Act, strengthening tenant protections, and election and campaign finance reform. I also look forward to getting to know my new colleagues’ priorities and to working with them on advancing our shared goals. I am impressed by the commitment and experience my colleagues bring to this new challenge and look forward to getting to know them better in the days and months ahead.

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The Senate Democrats technically had the majority after the 2008, 2012 and 2016 elections, but have never had a functional majority. In the 2009-10 session we had a one seat majority, but unfortunately a combination of the corruption of some of the Senators and a coup meant we did not accomplish nearly as much as we could have. Later majorities were undermined by the alliance of the Independent Democratic Conference with the Republicans. So the current situation where the Democrats have a stable majority is a first for me in my time in the Senate, and a first for New York in nearly eighty years.

The decades of Republican control of the Senate means there is a lot of pent-up demand for action on a whole host of issues. We won’t be able to address everything on day one, and members will have different priorities. Not all the new or returning members are going to agree with everything I will be pushing, as our larger conference is also more diverse in terms of who we represent. That said, I am optimistic that the upcoming session will see a great deal of substantive legislative action on an agenda that addresses the needs of New Yorkers and helps restore the reputation of New York as a leader on progressive policy. I can’t wait to get to work when the session begins in January!

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

Home Stability Support

I recently introduced a Senate version of Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi's Home Stability Support (HSS) legislation (A.8178/S.9195). This bill would create a new statewide rent supplement for families and individuals eligible for public assistance who are homeless or facing an imminent loss of housing. There are over 150,000 homeless children in New York State and another 80,000 families on the brink of homelessness. This legislation would be a new tool for addressing this crisis.

According to New York State's report to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 19,000 more people become homeless than escape homelessness every year. Two-thirds of public assistance households living in private housing have rents that exceed the amount of their shelter allowances. The rent supplement will be a bridge between the current shelter allowance and 85% of the fair market rent, which is determined by HUD. Local districts will have the option to further raise the supplement up to 100% of the fair market rent at local expense.

There would be a significant cost to the state for the program, but this would be more than offset by savings to local governments due to reduced costs serving homeless families and individuals. At full implementation the state will fund HSS at \$200 million, which could be phased in at \$40 million per year over the course of 5 years.

The cost will be fully borne by the state -- there will be no mandated costs to localities. However, as Home Stability Support only covers up to 85% of the fair market rent, localities will be given the option to bridge the gap to 100% and fund the additional 15%.

As an example of the cost effectiveness of HSS, the subsidy for a family in New York City would be approximately \$11,000 per year, while the current cost of shelter for the same family costs over \$38,000, a savings to taxpayers of \$27,000. There would be similar savings in lower-cost regions outside of the city.

Beyond the issue of cost-effectiveness, this program is simply the right thing to do. Keeping people out of the shelter system and in permanent housing improves quality of life, provides the stability for people to move to self-sufficiency, and results in improved educational outcomes for children. I will be working with Assemblymember Hevesi to make this program a reality.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

West Side Tenants' Conference December 8th:

The 13th Annual West Side Tenants' Conference will take place on Saturday, December 8th from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Fordham University School of Law, 150 West 62nd Street. New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie will be the keynote speaker. There will be workshops on finding affordable housing, organizing for stronger rent laws, housing benefits for seniors, succession rights,

and more. There will also be a free legal advice clinic. The conference is free and breakfast and lunch will be service.

The conference is being organized by Housing Conservation Coordinators, Inc. in coalition with local community groups, elected officials and tenant advocates. For more information or to RSVP, call 845-367-7003 or email jfurlong@hcc-nyc.org.

Town Hall with Mayor de Blasio and Councilmember Powers on December 19th:

The Mayor will be returning to Council District 4 to host a town hall with Council Member Keith Powers on Wednesday, December 19th. Commissioners of city agencies will attend with the Mayor to answer any questions from members of the community. The event will run from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.. The location is yet to be determined. To RSVP or for more information contact the office of CM Powers at 212-818-0580.

Supporting New Regulations Implementing NYC Illegal Hotel Legislation:

Earlier this year, the City Council unanimously passed regulations to protect our neighborhoods by requiring online platforms like Airbnb to provide enforcement officials with basic data on their listings. But despite sharing this same data with cities across the globe, Airbnb refuses to do so in New York because they make hundreds of millions of dollars here – more than in any other U.S. city – off of illegal rentals.

The NYC Office of Special Enforcement (OSE) has now drafted rules to implement the new law. I strongly supported the law as well as the proposed regulations. If you would like to support the regulations you can write to OSE using the following link: <https://mobilize4change.org/DLeDpig>.

It provides sample language that you should feel free to modify to reflect your particular concerns.

Department of Buildings Office of the Tenant Advocate:

The Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA), established by Local Law 161 of 2017, serves as a resource to tenants who are affected by work in occupied multiple dwellings. Tenants may contact OTA with comments, questions and complaints concerning construction in occupied multiple dwellings. Tenants may also contact OTA if they have questions or concerns related to Tenant Protection Plans. You may contact the Tenant Advocate at (212) 393-2949 or TenantAdvocate@buildings.nyc.gov.

NYPD Neighborhood Policing “Build the Block” Meetings:

Neighborhood Policing is changing the way the NYPD keeps your neighborhood safe. Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs) are assigned to and remain in a sector, or neighborhood, for the duration of their tour. Additionally, NCOs are given the time and flexibility to make strong bonds with the community they serve.

Neighborhood policing seeks to close the divide between cops and community. But it can only succeed with your support. That's why the NYPD has been holding a series of local meetings. These "Build the Block" neighborhood safety meetings are strategy sessions between local police officers and the people they serve. The meetings have two simple goals: identify the public safety challenges of a specific neighborhood and discuss potential solutions.

Join the discussion about issues in your community. This is your opportunity to have your voice heard about specific safety and policing challenges in your own neighborhood. To locate a meeting in your neighborhood, go to www.buildtheblock.nyc.

Open Enrollment for Healthcare Marketplace Coverage:

The Open Enrollment Period for the Healthcare Marketplace in New York will run through January 31, 2019. As was the case last year, the Trump administration decided to significantly shorten the Open Enrollment Period. New York has its own marketplace, however, and therefore is able to determine the length of its Open Enrollment Period.

2019 health insurance plan details are now available. If you would like to consult with a trained representative at no charge prior to selecting your health insurance plan, Navigator Sites are an excellent resource. The following is the contact information for a local Navigator Site:

Community Service Society of New York
633 Third Avenue, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: 888-614-5400

Please make sure to call and schedule an appointment for November 1st through January 31st to ensure health care coverage in 2019. You will need to sign up for a health insurance policy by December 15th in order for it to take effect January 1, 2019.

Before selecting your plan, it is important to check the following:

- Will your primary physician, OB/GYN, and any specialists accept the insurance? This is important to verify, even if you are not changing plans. Health insurance companies are using narrower provider networks than before, which may cause reductions to their list of in-network providers. Please note that a new search tool has been added to the New York State of Health marketplace website: <https://pndslookup.health.ny.gov/>. This tool allows you to search by medical provider to see what health insurance plans s/he accepts. It also allows you to search by health plan to see which medical providers are in-network.

- Will any regularly prescribed medications be covered under the plan? Each health insurance plan has a list of pharmaceuticals that are covered. If you are concerned about prescriptions being covered, this is important to verify before you enroll in the plan. Navigator Site representatives can provide assistance with this.

- Which plan will be the most affordable while providing the amount of coverage you need? Research has shown that many people do not take the time to comparison shop before selecting a health insurance policy. It is worth taking the time to consider your healthcare needs and assess which plan will give you the greatest savings based on premiums charged, co-pays, and deductibles. Navigator Site representatives can also provide assistance with doing a comparison of plan costs.

Ban on Polystyrene Products Begins January 1st:

Beginning January 1st, 2019, certain expanded polystyrene items will be banned from sale, distribution, or use in New York City. I carry legislation that would impose a similar ban at the state level, and am pleased that the city has enacted this important environmental legislation. For more information, visit nyc.gov/foamban.

Small businesses not part of a chain with less than \$500,000 in gross income for the most recent tax year and non-profit corporations may apply for hardship exemptions from the Department of Small Business Services. For more information, visit nyc.gov/foamwaiver.

Visit www.nyc.gov/dsnybusinessresources to access free educational materials, trainings, and site visits. Email questions to commercialprograms@dsny.nyc.gov.

DOROT Winter Package Delivery:

On February 3rd, DOROT is having their annual Winter Package Delivery. This event is able to happen because over 600 dedicated DOROT volunteers come pick up packages of winter themed treats such as hats and gloves, tea, biscuits, soup, dried fruit, chocolates and much more. The volunteers deliver the items along with a one hour social visit to the seniors enrolled in this program. Quite often the volunteers and the seniors want to visit with each other again and many times we can create a long lasting weekly or monthly Friendly Visiting Match.

Any senior who would like to participate in this program is required to do a brief intake over the phone and have a home visit prior to the event from a DOROT social worker. This program is open to any appropriate senior over the age of 65 and who lives between West 59th and West 125th Streets or East 14th and East 96th Streets. This is not a needs- or income-based program and all are welcome to participate but space is limited.

If you know a senior who you think would like a Winter Package Delivery along with a volunteer visit, now is the time to reach out. Again, please let the senior know that they must be seen by a DOROT social worker prior to the event to prevent confusion. The deadline to connect a new senior for this event is January 15th. Please email or call Ellen Finney at efinney@dorotusa.org or 917-441-5056 with any questions or seniors you'd like to connect!

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: Walk-in Clinic. The next clinic will take place Tuesday, December 11 from 10:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street. You must arrive before Noon to ensure you can be seen. If you are 62 years or older, live in a rent regulated apartment and have an annual household income of \$50,000 or less you may be eligible for the Rent Freeze Program. Find out if you are eligible and get assistance applying or recertifying for SCRIE.
- DRIE Clinics: By Appointment only. The next clinic will take place Thursday December 13, and February 7 from 1:30 p.m to 4:00 p.m at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street. You must arrive before Noon to ensure you can be seen. If you are receiving disability benefits, live in a rent-regulated apartment and have an annual household income of \$50,000 or less you may be eligible for the Rent Freeze Program. Find out if you are eligible and get assistance applying or recertifying for SCRIE. For more information, please email DRIE@lenoxhill.org or call 212-218-1503, option 0.
- Tenants Rights Advice Clinic: Walk-in clinic, now at 2 locations.
- December 13 and February 7 from 10am to 1pm at 331 East 70th Street. First come-first Served, arrive by Noon.

- December 19 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the East Harlem Health Action Center, 158 East 115th Street. First come, first served, arrive by 4 p.m. Please bring all relevant housing-related documents with you.

- Health Insurance Enrollment: call 212-218-0432. Assistance with finding and enrolling in an affordable health insurance plan.

VOLS Legal Clinics for Seniors:

The VOLS Elderly Project will be at one location in my district this month. The Elderly Project staff and pro bono attorneys provide free legal advice, information, document drafting, and other brief services to low-income Manhattan residents aged 60 and over, and to the social workers and advocates who assist them. Their schedule includes

Friday December 14th - 2:00 pm, Legal Clinic,
Burden Center for the Aging, 415 East 73rd Street (b/t 1st and York)

Monday, December 10th - 10:00 am, Legal Clinic,
Encore Community Services Center, 239 West 49th Street (b/t Broadway and 8th Ave.)

Friday, December 21st - 10:00 am, Legal Clinic,
Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, 415 East 93rd Street

And, just across the Park on the Westside: Monthly Housing Clinics and Workshops:

Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Goddard Riverside's SRO Law Project, and the Urban Justice Center co-sponsor monthly housing clinics and workshops at the Goddard Riverside Community Center, 593 Columbus Avenue (between 88th and 89th Streets). On the first Wednesday of each month, from 6pm – 8pm, the clinic offers a presentation on a variety of topics, followed by a question and answer session. Each evening, at least one staff attorney will meet with individuals who are seeking specific legal advice.

For questions, contact the Office of Council Member Rosenthal at (212) 873-0282 ext. 206 or Helen@helenrosenthal.com. Sign-up sheet starting at 6pm each evening.

January 2, 2019: DHCR I: IAI and MCIs

February 6, 2019: DHCR II: Failure to Provide a Lease and Rent Overcharge applications

March 6, 2019: When a landlord wants you to go: Harassment, Construction Harassment and Buyouts

April 3, 2019: Eviction Prevention: Residency Challenges, Clutter, Unapproved Alterations, Nuisances

May 1, 2019: Succession Rights I: Family, Partners and Others

June 5, 2019: Succession Rights II: Apartment Sharing, Roommates, Sublets, Short-term rentals

Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan:

553 West 30th Street Apartments is now accepting applications for 172 affordable studio, 1- and 2-bedroom apartments newly constructed at 553 West 30th Street in the Chelsea neighborhood in Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$858 to 1,350 depending on unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$31,303 and \$62,580 depending on unit and family size. Asset limits also apply. Preference will be given to Community Board 4 residents for 50% of units, mobility-impaired persons for 5% of units, visual- and/or hearing-impaired persons for 2% of units, and City of New York municipal employees for 5% of units. A full description of the building and application process is available at

<https://a806-housingconnect.nyc.gov/nyclottery/AdvertisementPdf/602.pdf>.

Households may elect to submit an application by one of two methods: EITHER online OR by mail. To submit your application online now, please visit NYC Housing Connect at www.nyc.gov/housingconnect and select "Apply for Housing." To request an application by mail, mail a self-addressed envelope to: 553W30 Apartments, P.O. Box 8630, New York, NY 10116.

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by December 13, 2018. Applicants who submit more than one application may be disqualified.

Avalon Midtown West is now accepting applications for 28 affordable studio, 1- and 2- bedroom apartments newly designated at 250 West 50th Street in the Midtown Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$2,138 to 2,993 depending on unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$73,303 and \$135,590 depending on unit and family size. Asset limits also apply. Preference will be given to mobility-impaired persons for 5% of units, and visual- and/or hearing-impaired persons for 2% of units. A full description of the building and application process is available at <https://a806-housingconnect.nyc.gov/nyclottery/AdvertisementPdf/17.pdf>.

Households may elect to submit an application by one of two methods: EITHER online OR by mail. To submit your application online now, please visit NYC Housing Connect at www.nyc.gov/housingconnect and select "Apply for Housing." To request an application by mail, mail a self-addressed envelope to: Midtown West Affordable – 510 W. 52nd Street, New York, NY 10019.

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by December 31, 2018. Applicants who submit more than one application may be disqualified.

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:

- December 11, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- December 11, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- December 11, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- December 13, 8:00 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- December 13, 11:30 am - 2:00 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- December 19, 9 – 10:30 am, 79 Street & Third Avenue - Bus
- December 19, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- December 19, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- January 2, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & Third Avenue – Bus
- January 2, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- January 2, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- January 3, 7 – 9 am, 91 Street and York Avenue - Van
- January 3, 8:00 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- January 3, 11:30 am - 2:00 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van

January 4, 9 - 10 am, 57 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
January 4, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 Street and 3 Avenue – Van
January 4, 12:30 - 2:00 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.

Heat Season Rules:

The City Housing Maintenance Code and State Multiple Dwelling Law require building owners to provide heat and hot water to all tenants. Building owners are required to provide hot water 365 days a year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Between October 1st and May 31st, a period designated as “Heat Season,” building owners are also required to provide tenants with heat under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6AM and 10PM if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between the hours of 10PM and 6AM the inside temperature is required to be at least 62 degrees Fahrenheit. Note that there is no longer any outside temperature requirement for night hours

Tenants who are cold in their apartments should first attempt to notify the building owner, managing agent or superintendent. If heat is not restored, the tenant should call the City’s Citizen Service Center at 311. For the hearing-impaired, the TTY number is (212) 504-4115. The Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.