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New York State Senate | 28th District

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Message from Liz...

Governor Cuomo has started to roll out his legislative agenda in advance of his January State of the State address and there are a number of worthy proposals, including stronger gun laws, cracking down on abuses by debt collectors, and making it easier to block scam calls and other robocalls. One issue he has included in his agenda that I am particularly interested in is a ban on single-use polystyrene foam (Styrofoam) containers. I have carried legislation for years to ban these products, which take centuries to biodegrade, are effectively impossible to recycle, and are a carcinogen that has become ubiquitous in our environment.

Polystyrene foam is not biodegradable or compostable – it remains in the environment effectively forever. Although it is technically recyclable, for all practical purposes it is not able to be recycled under even the most favorable real-world conditions. In fact, polystyrene foam has a negative impact on existing recycling efforts, contaminating other, valuable product streams like paper.

Styrene, one of the main components of polystyrene, is a carcinogen and a neurotoxin, according to the World Health Organization and the US Department of Health. Trace amounts can now be found in the fat tissue of every person in the United States. And the polystyrene manufacturing process is the fifth largest creator of hazardous waste in the country.

Single-use polystyrene foam is a big contributor to litter. Riverkeeper's 2018 Hudson River cleanup found that foam items (pieces, cups, containers, etc) were second only to cigarette butts in terms of the number of items picked up. Foam litter contributes to clogs in storm drains and sewers, resulting in cleanup costs for localities. Like other plastic litter, polystyrene foam ends up breaking down into tiny pieces that attract additional toxins, are eaten by fish, and eventually end up on our plates.

New York City has already banned single-use polystyrene foam, as have Nassau County, Suffolk County, Westchester County, Albany County, and Ulster County. This means that 66% of the state's population is already covered by bans, and other localities are considering them, including the City of Buffalo and several towns and villages. Nationwide, notable localities with bans include: Maine,

What's Inside

Message from Liz	1
Policy Spotlight	2
- Women on Corporate Boards	
- Elevator Safety	
Community Spotlight	3
- Forum on Scams February 7th	
- Survey on Finding a Doctor for Medicare and Medicare Advantage Patients	
- Expanded Fair Fares Transit Discount Starts January 27th	
- Join Your Neighborhood Organizing Census Committee	
- CEC District 2 Students with Disabilities Committee Meeting	
- Apply to be a Community Board Member	
- Renew Your IDNYC Now	
- Citizens Committee for New York City Neighborhood Grants Program	
- Open Enrollment for Health Care Marketplace Coverage	
- Legal Advocacy Clinics From Lenox Hill Neighborhood House	
- VOLS Legal Clinics for Seniors	
- Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan	
- Metrocard Bus and Van Schedule	
- Heat Season Rules	

Maryland, Vermont, Washington DC, Los Angeles County, San Francisco, Baltimore, Portland, and Minneapolis.

Alternatives to polystyrene foam are available and affordable, including compostable and recyclable alternatives. I am hopeful that with the Governor's support New York can join the many other governments that have recognized the need to ban polystyrene foam as part of a broader strategy for reducing pollution and cleaning up our waste stream.

Of course, polystyrene foam is only one of many petroleum-based waste products we must address. New York took an important step last year by banning single-use plastic bags, and it will be crucial that we ensure this ban is implemented effectively.

I will also be working with my colleagues to build support for broader efforts to reduce plastic waste. We need to move to a model of extended producer responsibility that puts the onus on plastic producers to mitigate the impacts of their products by recycling or removing them from the waste stream.

There are a number of other bills addressing plastic waste that I hope to see action on this year including:

- legislation I carry to reduce plastic pollution and the destruction of marine life due to plastic devices used to package beverage containers, commonly referred to as "six pack rings," by prohibiting the sale of beverages held together by such packaging (S.6647A-Krueger/A.8305A-Paulin)
- legislation to prohibit hotels from providing small bottles used for personal care products like shampoo, conditioner, lotion, and liquid soap (S.5282A-Kaminsky/A.7662A-Englebright).
- legislation requiring a ban on plastic straws in most food establishments except when requested by the customer (S.1477-Hoylman/A.90-Rosenthal).

I also expect to be introducing legislation soon to address the scourge of non-biodegradable, toxic cigarette butts and single-use e-cigarettes. And finally, it is past time to update New York State's bottle bill to more effectively capture products now excluded from recycling while ensuring it does not undermine the economic viability of current municipal recycling efforts.

After years of delay, New York made a great deal of progress in moving important environmental legislation in 2019, but we cannot rest on our laurels. The climate crisis is only going to get more urgent, and the proliferation of plastic waste undermines more and more ecosystems (not to mention human health) each year. New York still has a long way to go in addressing these critical issues.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

Women on Corporate Boards

Last month Governor Cuomo signed my legislation (S.4278) requiring the New York State Department of State and the Department of Taxation and Finance to conduct a study on the number of women directors who serve on each board of directors of domestic and foreign corporations authorized to do business in New York. Assemblymember Seawright carried the Assembly version of the bill.

Underrepresentation of women at the highest levels of corporate governance has been a persistent problem that has far-reaching implications for employees and consumers. Among other things, data shows that companies with less than three women on their board perform worse financially. New York is home to some of the world's largest and most influential corporations, so what we do here reverberates far beyond our borders. This bill takes an important step toward getting the information we need to bring this problem into the light.

This legislation will require that the study include the number of women directors, total number of directors that constitute boards of directors, analysis of the change in number of women directors from previous years and the aggregate percentage of women directors on all boards. The study will be published no later than February 1, 2022.

Elevator Safety

On January 1, the Governor signed legislation sponsored by Senator Diane Savino and Assemblymember Marcos Crespo to require all individuals engaged in the design, construction, inspection, maintenance and repair of elevators or other automated people moving conveyances to be licensed by New York State (S.4080-C/A.4509). The lack of a licensing requirement for elevator inspectors has been cited in multiple tragic incidents where New Yorkers have been injured or killed by elevator malfunctions. I cosponsored this bill, and have been working for years with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get this loophole in New York law addressed.

This new law will help protect the public and prevent injury from unsafe and poorly maintained elevators by requiring all individuals who work with elevators and other automated people moving conveyances to be licensed by New York State. In order to receive a license, these individuals will need to meet necessary qualifications and participate in training and continuing education.

I thank Senator Savino and Assemblymember Crespo for their efforts in finally getting this legislation passed, and Governor Cuomo for signing this important bill.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Forum on Scams February 7th:

On Friday, February 7th, I and my colleague Senator Jose Serrano are hosting a Forum on Scams. The forum will offer information on how to protect yourself and your loved ones from predatory phone calls, emails and letters. Officers from the 19th Precinct will provide information on specific scams, do's and don't's, and who to contact to report scams. The forum will take place from 2PM to 4PM at Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center, 415 East 93rd Street, between 1st Avenue and the FDR. To RSVP, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ScamForum2020> or call 212-490-9435.

Survey on Finding a Doctor for Medicare and Medicare Advantage Patients:

If you have Medicare health insurance - either original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan - I am interested in hearing what your experience has been finding medical providers that accept your insurance. Please take a few minutes to fill out a short survey and let us know what you have

experienced when looking for primary care providers and specialists that accept your Medicare plan. Click on the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/medicare-access-survey>.

Expanded Fair Fares Transit Discount Starts January 27th:

Fair Fares open enrollment begins January 27th and the program has been expanded to include all New Yorkers with incomes at or below the poverty line, which is currently \$12,490 for singles and \$25,750 for a family of four. Under the Fair Fares program New York City residents receive a 50% discount on subway and eligible bus fares. Pay-Per-Ride, 7-Day (Weekly) and 30-Day (Monthly) Unlimited Ride options are all available. The program started to roll out in phases in 2019, and almost 100,000 people have signed up. For more information on applying, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/fairfares/index.page>.

Join Your Neighborhood Organizing Census Committee:

In an effort to increase Census response rates NYC Census 2020 has established Neighborhood Organizing Census Committees (NOCCs) to provide an organizational structure for local volunteers to do their own direct outreach on the importance of the census. Volunteers will organize teach-ins, phone banks, and text-banks to get out the count. Each volunteer will choose which team they want to work with and how much responsibility they want to take on. If you are interested in getting involved in a NOCC, visit www.nyc.gov/noccs.

CEC District 2 Students with Disabilities Committee Meeting:

The Community Education Council District 2 Students with Disabilities Committee will be meeting on Thursday, January 9th at 9am in the library at Robert Wagner Middle School, 220 East 76th Street. There will be coffee, as well as discussion of issues including: What are the signs of a learning disability; when to push for an evaluation and/or 504 accommodation; knowing your rights and what to ask for in an IEP; support groups and where to get help; pushing for a public school for children with dyslexia; legislation to change the system; and more. For questions, contact Committee Chair Emily Hellstrom at ehellstrom@cecd2.net.

Apply to be a Community Board Member:

The Manhattan Borough President's office is now accepting applications for Community Board membership. New Yorkers living, working, or studying in one of Manhattan's 12 Community Board districts are encouraged to apply. Community Boards are the most grass roots form of local government, each composed of 50 volunteer members serving staggered two-year terms. The Boards are pivotal in shaping their communities and they work to enhance and preserve the character of their neighborhoods.

You may apply online at <https://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov/cbapplication/>. Applications are due by January 21, 2020.

Renew Your IDNYC Now:

IDNYC is the largest municipal ID program in the country with over 1.3 million cardholders. With the fifth anniversary of IDNYC fast approaching and the first set of cards expiring as early as January 2020, December 2nd, 2019, marked the first day New Yorkers were able to begin renewing their IDNYC.

Eligible card holders can renew their IDNYC through a new online portal or in person at an Enrollment Center. Cardholders whose card is set to expire up to 60 days before expiration date and up to 6

months after the expiration date can do so simply and quickly. After completing the renewal process, all cardholders will receive a new IDNYC card featuring the Statue of Liberty.

IDNYC has been a facilitator of access, a key to unlock the services and supports, as well as the best of New York City's cultural offerings.

To renew your IDNYC, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/idnyc/card/renew-your-idnyc-card.page>.

If you do not have an IDNYC and would like to get one, visit <https://a069-idnyconlineportal.nyc.gov/IOPWeb/#/EN/NewApplication>.

Citizens Committee for New York City Neighborhood Grants Program:

Citizens Committee for New York City is now accepting applications from volunteer-led groups for their Neighborhood Grants program, which provides up to \$3,000 for community improvement projects. Eligible groups include block and civic associations, tenant associations, PTAs, community gardening groups, volunteer organizations working with youth and seniors, and others. Groups do not have to be a 501c3.

Examples of projects include turning a vacant lot into a community garden or composting site; facilitating workshops on healthy cooking and eating; beautifying public spaces; arts and cultural programs; and youth fitness initiatives.

To apply or for more information, visit <https://www.citizensnyc.org/grants/neighborhood-grants>. The application deadline is January 20th, 2020.

Open Enrollment for Health Care Marketplace Coverage:

The Open Enrollment Period for the Health Care Marketplace in New York will run from November 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020. As was the case for the past two years, the Trump administration decided to significantly shorten the Open Enrollment Period, however New York has its own marketplace, and therefore is able to determine the length of its Open Enrollment Period. If you want to enroll for health insurance through the individual marketplace for coverage in 2020, the upcoming Open Enrollment Period will run from November 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020. It is also important for you to know that eligible policy holders will still receive cost-sharing subsidies to help make the cost of health insurance more affordable. Please note that if you already have a health insurance policy through the individual marketplace and want to make a change, you can do so on or after November 16th.

2020 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 2020.

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 health care 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.

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. Arrive by Noon.

First come, first served. Bring proof of identity, income information, utility bill, proof of housing costs, information on any dependents, proof of immigration status for non-citizens, and if you are 60 or over or on SSI/SSD, information on medical costs. For more information, call 212-218-0503, option 2.

- Tenants Rights Advice Clinic: Walk-in clinic, now at 3 locations.

- February 20 from 10am to 1pm at 331 East 70th Street. First come-first Served, arrive by Noon.

- January 15 at East Harlem Action Center, 158 East 115th Street, from 2pm to 5 pm. First come-first Served, arrive by 4 pm.

- January 30 at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Casa Mutua, 159 East 102nd Street, from 2pm to 5 pm. First come-first Served, arrive by 4 pm.

- SCRIE Clinics: Walk-in Clinic. The next clinics will take place March 17 from 10:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street. You must arrive before 11:30 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 Assistance: If you are 18 years of age or older, live in a rent-regulated apartment, receive disability-related benefits and have income below \$50,000/year, you may be eligible for DRIE. For an appointment or information, contact us at DRIE@lenoxhill.org or 212-218-0503, option 0.

- Health Care Access Project: call 212-218-0503. Assistance with Medicaid, Medicare Savings Program Medicare Part D, Epic and health insurance through the New York State of Health Marketplace.

- Advance Directives: If you need assistance from a volunteer attorney with setting up advance directives, including health care proxies, living wills, powers of attorney and simple, low asset wills, contact the Advance Directives Project's intake hotline at 212-218-0503, option 4, for an eligibility screening.

VOLS Legal Clinics for Seniors:

The VOLS 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 January 10th - 2:00 pm, Legal Clinic,
Burden Center for the Aging, 415 East 73rd Street (b/t 1st and York)

Friday January 17th - 10:00 am, Legal Clinic,
Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, 415 East 93rd Street

Monday January 27th - 10:00 am, Legal Clinic,
Encore Community Services Center, 239 West 49th Street (b/t Broadway and 8th Ave.)

Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan:

433 East 13th Street Apartments is now accepting applications for 30 affordable studio and 1- and 2-bedroom apartments newly constructed at 433 East 13th Street in the East Village neighborhood in Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$674 to \$2,991 depending on income and unit size. Applicants must have incomes between \$25,063 and \$149,890 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/892.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 433 East 13th Street Apartments c/o SHF Affordable Housing Office, 247 West 37th Street, 1903, New York, NY 10018.

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by January 27, 2020. Applicants who submit more than one application may be disqualified.

251 West 117th Street Apartments is now accepting applications for 32 affordable studio and 1- and 2-bedroom apartments newly constructed at 251 West 117th Street in the Central Harlem neighborhood in Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$2,357 and 3,044 depending on unit size. Applicants must have incomes between \$80,812 and \$149,890 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/896.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 117th Street Equities, LLC, located at 316 West 118th Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY, 10026.

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by January 31, 2020. Applicants who submit more than one application may be disqualified.

Sioné Apartments is now accepting applications for 23 affordable studio and 1-bedroom apartments newly constructed at 171 Suffolk Street on the Lower East Side in Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$613 and 2,200 depending on income and unit size. Applicants must have incomes between \$23,623 and \$124,930 depending on unit and family size. Asset limits also apply. Preference will be given to residents of Manhattan Community Board 3 for 50% of units, mobility-impaired persons for 5% of units, visual- and/or hearing-impaired persons for 2% of units, and municipal employees for 5% on units. A full description of the building and application process is available at <https://a806-housingconnect.nyc.gov/nyclottery/AdvertisementPdf/904.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 Sione Apartments c/o Housing Partnership Development Corporation, 253 West 35 Street, 3rd Floor, NY, NY 10001

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by February 6, 2020. 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:

- January 14, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- January 14, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- January 14, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- January 15, 9 – 10:30 am, 79 Street & Third Avenue - Bus
- January 15, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- January 15, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- January 16, 8:00 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- January 16, 11:30 am - 2:00 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- January 28, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- January 28, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- January 28, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- February 5, 9 – 10:30 am, 79 Street & Third Avenue - Bus
- February 5, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- February 5, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- February 6, 7 – 9 am, 90 Street and York Avenue - Van
- February 6, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- February 6, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van

February 7, 9 - 10 am, 57 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
February 7, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 Street and 3 Avenue – Van
February 7, 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.