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New York State Senate | 28th District

February 2013

Message from Liz...

In his State of the State address last month, Governor Cuomo outlined a progressive agenda that included a number of proposals that have long been priorities of mine, including public financing of campaigns and increasing the minimum wage. But of all his proposals, I was most excited by the prospect of a comprehensive **Women's Equality Act**, in which the governor will bring together a number of measures to create a level playing field for women in the workplace, address domestic violence, and protect reproductive choice.

I believe the Women's Equality Act could become a signature accomplishment of the Cuomo administration, and all of us who believe in the importance of addressing these issues must mobilize support behind this proposed legislation.

While the Governor has not yet provided legislative text, he indicates the key features of the legislation will be as follows:

- Protect a Woman's Freedom of Choice by Enacting the Reproductive Health Act
- Achieve Pay Equity
- Stop Sexual Harassment in All Workplaces
- Allow for the Recovery of Attorneys' Fees in Employment and Credit and Lending Cases
- Strengthen Human Trafficking Laws
- End Family Status Discrimination
- Stop Source-of-Income Discrimination
- Stop Housing Discrimination for Victims of Domestic Violence
- Stop Pregnancy Discrimination Once and For All
- Protect Victims of Domestic Violence by Strengthening Order-of-Protection Laws

This is a comprehensive and compelling agenda. I currently carry some of these proposals, including the Fair Pay Act (S. 1491) and legislation to require reasonable accommodations for pregnant women in the workplace (S. 1479). I have also been a cosponsor of the Reproductive Health Act for many years – and for many years, all of these bills have failed to move in the legislature. The governor's support for this agenda is critical, and we must take advantage of this opportunity for real progress on these critical issues for women.

There is reason for concern. Anti-choice advocates have mobilized in opposition to the

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reproductive health provisions of the governor's proposal. These provisions are not revolutionary, but are long overdue: they simply update outdated provisions in New York State law, provide that reproductive health decisions should be treated as personal, private healthcare decisions, and consolidate New York's laws on this subject within the context of health rather than criminal law. It would also ensure that any weakening of the Roe v. Wade precedent would not cause changes to the law in New York State.

I urge you to join me in expressing support for the Women's Equality Act, and have created an [online petition](#) at my Senate web site. All of us who believe that New York should be a leader in the fight for equal opportunities for women need to make our voices heard at this critical moment.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Senator Liz Krueger’s Roundtable for Boomers & Seniors:

In the past century, U.S. life expectancy at birth has climbed from 47 to 77 years, and according to some statistics the average life span today may be as high as 85 years. America's 78 million baby boomers began turning 65 last year at a rate of one every 10 seconds (3 to 4 million per year). By the middle of the next decade, the U.S. will become a society with more Americans over age 60 than under age 15.

This year’s 5 part Roundtable series is being devoted to discussions around “**The Challenges of Longevity.**” Our guest speakers will be introducing such topics as: Longevity and Its Impact on Society, Health Care Challenges, Work Place Challenges, and Aging as a Community Experience, including Family Challenges and The Role of Technology.

The Roundtable meets once a month over a five-month period. **The fourth session, “Longevity and Its Impact in the Workplace,” will take place on Thursday, February 21, from 8:30 am – 10:30 am** at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street.

To RSVP or request additional information, contact Rebekah Glushefski, rglushefski.nyc@gmail.com, or call our office at 212-490-9535.

Find Out If You’re Eligible for SNAP Benefits:

Recent changes have expanded Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps) eligibility in New York City, so more individuals and families are eligible for SNAP benefits than ever before. The Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Food Stamp Advocate conducts confidential pre-screenings to determine whether clients are eligible and assists them in submitting their applications.

If you are interested in determining whether you are eligible for SNAP benefits, please call the Food Stamp Advocate at 212 744-5022, ext. 1278. You can also come to our Food Stamp Assistance Clinic, which is held at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street, every Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. - 1 p.m. No appointment is needed.

Free Tax Preparation Assistance:

I encourage you to take advantage of these services, which can save you money and ensure you avoid getting caught in “Refund Anticipation Loan” scams that many for-profit tax preparers engage in. Here are some sites in the 28th Senatorial District where you can get free assistance with your taxes:

Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL), 188 Madison Ave @ 34th, Street

Telephone: 646-315-7703

Site Hours: Monday, Tuesday 11am-3pm; Wednesday, Thursday, 4-6pm; Friday, Saturday 3-5pm.

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by Food Bank for NYC

58th Street Library, 127 East 58th Street

Telephone: [212-759-7358](tel:212-759-7358)

Site Hours: Tuesday and Saturday, 10:30am-2:30pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

67th Street Library, 328 East 67th Street

Telephone: [212-734-1717](tel:212-734-1717)
Site Hours: Friday, 10:30am-2:30pm
Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Webster Branch Library, 1465 York Avenue
Telephone: [212-288-5049](tel:212-288-5049)
Site Hours: Monday, 10:30am-2:30pm
Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street
Telephone: [212-744-5022](tel:212-744-5022) ext. 1399
Site Hours: Wednesday, 10:00am-2:00pm
Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center, 415 East 93rd Street
Telephone: [212-360-7620](tel:212-360-7620)
Site Hours: Friday, 10:30am-3:00pm
Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Stein Senior Center, 204415 East 23rd Street
Telephone: [646-395-8083](tel:646-395-8083)
Site Hours: Thursday, 9:30am-2:30pm
Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Community Board 8 Discussion on the Need for a New Middle School:

The Youth & Education Committee of Community Board 8 will discuss the pressing need for a new middle school on the East Side at their February 11 meeting, and the possibility of siting that middle school in available space at P.S. 158. Members of the public are encouraged to attend, learn more, and offer input!

Also on the meeting's agenda: Principal Medea McAvooy of the recently-opened P.S. 267 elementary school will make a presentation on her new school with PTA presidents, and will participate in a Q & A.

The meeting will be held **Monday, February 11, at 7 pm**, at the New York Blood Center Auditorium, **310 East 67th Street**. Elected officials, local school principals, and representatives of the Department of Education are expected to attend.

Institute for Senior Action Spring 2013 Semester:

The Institute for Senior Action (IFSA), established by JPAC, is a comprehensive education, leadership, and advocacy training program which guides seniors on ways to become engaged in civic affairs and social action. All are welcome to explore, learn, and voice opinions.

Classes will take place on Wednesdays from **10 am to 2 pm**, beginning February 27th and ending on May 22nd, at JASA Cooper Square, 200 East 5th Street in Manhattan.

The informative and enlightening ten-week course is taught by carefully chosen experts who have exhibited a deep understanding within their respective fields. Past instructors include leaders from a diverse group of subjects such as gerontology and civic engagement, as well as visionaries of grassroots organizations.

To apply, or for more information, visit <http://www.jasa.org/services/advocacy/institute-senior-action> or call [212-273-5262](tel:212-273-5262).

Spring 2013 YouthAction Community Leadership Course:

The Spring 2013 YouthAction Community Leadership Course (YCLC) will begin on Monday, March 4th, and applications are due by Wednesday February 13th. YouthAction NYC is an after-school program for high school students interested in learning to advocate on behalf of themselves, their schools and their communities. Students research and discuss the issues that matter to them – and then graduate from the program with the skills they need to make positive changes for children and youth.

Students may access the application forms and other information about the YCLC at the Citizens' Committee for Children

website: <http://www.cccnewyork.org/youthactionnyc.html>

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Laura Jankstrom, MSW, at [212.673.1800 X 20](tel:212.673.1800) or ljankstrom@cccnewyork.org.

Social Security Expands “My Account” Online Tool:

The Social Security Administration has expanded the services available with a My Social Security account, a personalized online account that people can use beginning in their working years and continuing throughout the time they receive Social Security benefits. More than 60 million Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients can now access their benefit verification letter, payment history, and earnings record instantly using their online account. Social Security beneficiaries also can change their address and start or change direct deposit information online.

Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients with a My Social Security account can go online and get an official benefit verification letter instantly. The benefit verification letter serves as proof of income to secure loans, mortgages and other housing, and state or local benefits. Additionally, people use the letter to prove current Medicare health insurance coverage, retirement or disability status, and age. People can print or save a customized letter.

People age 18 and older can sign up for an account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount. Once there, they must be able to provide information about themselves and answers to questions that only they are likely to know. After completing the secure verification process, people can create a My Social Security account with a unique user name and password to access their information.

People age 18 and older who are not receiving benefits can sign up for a My Social Security account to get a personalized online Social Security Statement. The online Statement provides eligible workers with secure and convenient access to their Social Security earnings and benefit information, and estimates of future benefits they can use to plan for their retirement. In addition, the portal also includes links to information about other online services, such as applications for retirement, disability and Medicare.

For more information, please go to www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Apartment Building Recycling Initiative:

Are you an apartment dweller in New York City? Do you want to learn how to do a better job of recycling your trash? Would you like to see your neighbors improve their recycling effort? If the answer to these questions is yes, then you will want to know more about a program of the Department of Sanitation called the Apartment Building Recycling Initiative (ABRI).

The ABRI Outreach Coordinator will set up an intensive 1 to 2 hour training session for interested residents in your building, the super and those members of the building staff charged with trash collection. This is followed by a site visit to the building to evaluate existing recycling practices and to recommend changes. Those changes usually include placing illustrated decals on recycling containers – blue for beverage cartons, metal, glass bottles and jars and plastic bottles and jugs and green for mixed paper and cardboard. Education of all residents as well as building staff is a key element of the program. Besides making available easily understood educational materials for all tenants, DSNY will conduct follow-up training at the apartment building whenever 10 or more residents express a commitment to attend.

Signing up for ABRI couldn't be easier. Ask your building manager to go to the DSNY website, www.nyc.gov/wasteless/abri and provide the information requested on the relatively simple form. If you want to arrange an on-site training for 12 or more residents/building staff, fill out the last section on the registration form and within days the ABRI Outreach Coordinator will respond with a proposed training date.

The Apartment Building Recycling Initiative is a win-win for everyone involved. Residents will see an improved recycling rate at their building; the building staff should be spending far less time correcting the recycling errors of individual apartment residents, thus freeing staff to do other important work that will benefit all residents; and, the Environment will see a greater amount of recycling and far less waste going to noxious landfills.

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 MetroCard and Pay-Per-Ride MetroCard, and refill MetroCards and Reduced-Fare MetroCards. Buses and vans will be in my district on the following dates and locations:

- February 6, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 St & 3 Ave – Bus
- February 12, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- January 22, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- February 14, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 69 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- February 20, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 St & 3 Ave – Bus
- February 20, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 St & York Ave – Bus
- February 20, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 St & York Ave – Bus
- February 21, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 St & 2 Ave – Van
- February 21, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 St & 2 Ave – Van
- February 25, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- February 26, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- February 26, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 69 St & Lexington Ave – Bus

- March 1, 9 - 10 am, 57 St and 1 Ave – Van
- March 1, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 St and 3 Ave – Van
- March 1, 12:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 St and 1 Ave – Van
- March 6, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 St & York Ave – Bus
- March 6, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 St & York Ave – Bus
- March 7, 7 - 9:30 am, 90 St & York Ave – Van
- March 7, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 St & 2 Ave – Van
- March 7, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 St & 2 Ave – Van

The full mobile Metrocard schedule is available at <http://mta.info/metrocard/mms.htm>.

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, if the temperature outside falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

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](tel:2125044115). The Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

New York City Co-Op and Condo Tax Abatement

I am pleased to report that legislation renewing the New York City Coop / Condo Tax Abatement (S. 2320 / A. 3354) has now passed both houses of the legislature and been signed by Governor Cuomo.

The legislation passed extends the abatement through June 30, 2015, and is retroactive to June 1, 2011. It also makes minor changes to the program to increase the progressivity of the abatement, and to target benefits to units used as primary residences.

There are substantial inequities between the property taxes paid by owners of cooperatives and condominiums and owners of one- and two-family homes in New York City. Because of differences in the methods the city uses to determine the assessed values of class one and class two properties, cooperative and condominium owners routinely face tax bills that are two to three times those of comparably valued one- and two-family homes. New York City must create a long-term, comprehensive plan to bring about tax equity for cooperative and condominium owners.

While I voted for this legislation and was pleased with the passage of the renewal of the abatement, I was disappointed that this provision was included in a larger bill that included other provisions that serve primarily to benefit major developers while costing New York City hundreds of millions in lost tax revenue. The legislation extended the J-51 exemption for building renovations, and did not include any of the numerous proposals to better target this exemption toward the protection of affordable housing.

In addition, the legislation granted 421-a tax exemption benefits to five specific buildings in Manhattan that did not meet the program's eligibility standards. This program is supposed to encourage the development of affordable housing. One of the buildings included is One57, the tower under construction across from Carnegie Hall in my district, where the units have all been presold, including one penthouse that went for \$90 million. **It is a travesty that a building like One57, which contains no affordable units, should be receiving property tax exemptions under the 421-a program.**

I wish that these provisions could have been voted on separately, rather than being included in one massive bill, but I am pleased that this New York City co-op / condo tax abatement program has been extended, as it does serve an important role in improving the equity of our property tax structure for co-op and condo owners.

I will continue to work with cooperative and condominium owners to encourage the City Council and the Mayor to address the continuing inequities in the treatment of coops and condos under property tax law.