

Liz Krueger



New York State Senate | 28th District

May 2013

Message from Liz...

As we approach the end of the legislative session, members of the Senate Majority Coalition are making a lot of excuses as to why the Senate can't take action on several key pieces of the governor's agenda, including public financing of campaigns, marijuana arrest reform, and a comprehensive Women's Equality Act – including provisions protecting a woman's right to make her own private choices about her reproductive health, with her doctor, under New York State law.

These are all measures that deserve a vote on the Senate floor. If these major proposals are killed without even receiving an open vote, it will be a major failure for the Majority Coalition's professed goal of reforming the way Albany does business.

Members of the breakaway Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), which has allied with Republicans to form this "Majority Coalition" ruling the Senate, claim that reproductive health and marijuana reform can't pass because they cannot be assured of unanimous support from Democrats. And even though Democrats have unanimously announced their support for campaign finance reform, the Majority Coalition has still not committed to a floor vote even on that issue, because of the objections of Senate Republican leader Dean Skelos.

The reality is that in any legislative body, finding the votes for a particular measure often involves reaching across the aisle. Governor Cuomo proved adept at doing this in 2011, when he secured the support of four Republican senators to secure passage of marriage equality. Given the chance, I am sure that the governor, working with advocates, can achieve the same success on the 10-point Women's Equality Agenda and marijuana reform. But to achieve that success, there has to be a vote on the Senate floor.

What's more, there's a long history in New York State of advances on reproductive choice and women's rights in particular requiring and eventually securing bipartisan support. The Women's Health and Wellness Act passed in 2002 with the help of Republican votes. The original 1970 legislation decriminalizing abortion in New York also passed with bipartisan support.

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Between the Democratic Conference and the IDC, even the most conservative count only puts us one or two away from the 32 votes we need to pass the governor's full women's equality agenda, including protections for reproductive rights and health. If the bill goes to the floor – which it certainly would with a Democratic majority setting the agenda – I have confidence that it would have more than enough cross-party support to pass.

The case is even starker with regards to legislation creating a campaign finance system with public matching funds. In this case, cross-party support isn't even necessary – the members of both the Democratic Conference and the IDC have indicated they support such a proposal, so it could pass with a majority even if every Republican chose to vote no. While there are a few different bills floating around, they all share the core goal of creating a public matching-funds system to refocus elections back on everyday voters instead of big-money donors. The coalition needs to be willing to bring this proposal to the floor for a vote – a Republican minority shouldn't be empowered to block it. What's more: as with reproductive rights, I fully expect that if the bill did come for a vote, some Republican members would in fact support it.

Campaign finance and ethics reforms in general have become all the more urgent given the recent indictments of several legislators. Let me be clear: I have zero tolerance for legislators violating the law, either inside or outside our roles as public officials. We are supposed to be held to higher standards. No one forced us into these jobs. We asked you to vote for us and give us the power to establish the laws you must live under.

But as disturbing as the indictments are, there is a growing consciousness of Albany's stunningly open and more-or-less legal pay-to-play culture. Legislators are “rented” through huge campaign contributions that, with a nod and a wink, are connected to the submission of some bills or the holdup of others. Leaf through our daily newspapers in any given week, and you'll see stories about some legislator taking \$50,000, \$70,000 or even more in “legal” campaign contributions in exchange for acting on legislation benefiting special interests. I would submit that this is far more harmful to our state and to the concept of democracy than most of the individual indictment stories, and it disgusts me. Moreover, I think it contributes to a larger culture of corruption in the legislature that spawns the seemingly-perennial stream of indictments.

We need comprehensive, top-to-bottom reform, not a couple of narrow laws passed in response to one particular scheme or another. I believe that without such reform, we will not be able to change the corrupt culture of this town. That's why I think much lower donation and spending limits, small-donor matching funds, and strict laws preventing the “purchase” of legislative actions all need to pass this year – as soon as possible.

The bottom line is this: the only factor in preventing passage of comprehensive campaign finance and ethics reform, the full Women's Equality Agenda, and marijuana law reforms – all crucial, broadly-supported measures – is the IDC's decision to give the Republican Conference Leader, Dean Skelos, a veto over all legislative business.

There are still six weeks of session left to get these important bills done. The only thing holding them up is the usual Albany game of hide-the-ball, where Senate majority leaders refuse to allow their members to vote. Sometimes their members like it that way, as they

would prefer not to have to take a public stand on controversial issues – but taking these votes is what we are elected to do.

I will be working with the governor, with like-minded colleagues, and with advocates on all of these issues to encourage the reluctant Senate majority leadership to stop blocking votes on these critical issues.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

State Senator Liz Krueger Presents

Marijuana Policy Today: Where Do We go From Here?

Panelists:

Ethan Nadelmann
Executive Director, Drug Policy Alliance

Julie Holland, M.D.
Psychiatrist & Author

Lt. Joann Naughton, NYPD (Ret.)
Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

&

Personal Testimony by
Alfredo Carrasquillo
Community Organizer, VOCAL NY

Wednesday, May 15, 2013
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Baruch Performing Arts Center
The Engelman Recital Hall
55 Lexington Avenue
(Enter on East 25th Street)

For more information, please call [212-490-9535](tel:212-490-9535).

Forum on Universal Health Care in New York State:

Momentum for the campaign for universal, single-payer health care in New York State has been growing in the last two years. In the last three months alone, the New York Health bill has gained 26 more supporters in both chambers of the legislature, bringing the number of Assembly cosponsors to 74. Only two more cosponsors are needed to have majority support for the bill in the Assembly. This legislation would bring a universal, publicly-financed, privately-delivered health care system to the Empire State.

On May 16th, I will join Assembly Member Richard Gottfried at a forum titled *“Is Universal Health Care in New York State Within Reach?”* The forum is sponsored by the Peace and Justice Task Force of All Soul’s Church, Physicians for a National Health Program-NY Metro, and Healthcare-NOW New York City.

Join our discussion about how this program would work and how the campaign is mobilizing for a vote before the end of May! The forum will take place on Thursday May 16th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at All Souls Church, Reidy Friendship Hall, 1157 Lexington Avenue at East 79th Street.

Rent Control Forum on May 15th:

Tenants & Neighbors and the Goddard Riverside Community Center are hosting a forum on rent control, to be held May 15th at 6:00 pm, at 593 Columbus Avenue (at 88th street). The forum will be an opportunity to both hear from and address rent-controlled tenants from all over the city.

Rent control is an oft-misunderstood system. Most of New York’s rent-controlled tenants are elderly people living on fixed or declining incomes. When their rents rise, they can jump precipitously, compromising the affordability of many senior citizens’ homes and forcing them to choose between medicine, food, and shelter. Under the current system, many rent-controlled tenants have seen their rents increase by 7.5% every year for decades. On top of that, many are forced to pay fuel and labor “pass-alongs,” extra charges per room for fuel and labor costs that are not charged to rent-stabilized tenants or coop/condo shareholders. The Tenants & Neighbors Rent Controlled Leadership Committee is working to reform this system and present policy alternatives that will slow the escalating tide of rent increases.

At the forum, Tenants & Neighbors members will present on their work and their ideas for reform. Following the tenant speakers, elected officials will have an opportunity to speak and take questions. An attorney will also be present to speak to rent-controlled tenants about problems they are facing in their buildings.

If you have any questions, please email sstein@tandn.org, or call 212.608.4320 x316.

Roundtable on Organizing a Tenant Association:

On May 16th Tenants & Neighbors is hosting a roundtable discussion on Organizing a Tenant Association. The goal of this roundtable is for tenants to learn from one another and strengthen their tenant organizations. The theme of the upcoming roundtable will be **“Outreach in Your Building.”** Please be prepared to discuss the challenges and successes you have had with doing outreach in your building. Whether you are a part of a new tenant association or one that has been around for a long time, this is an opportunity to share your experiences and learn from others.

The Roundtable will be held Thursday, May 16 from 6:30-8:00 pm at the Tenants & Neighbors office located at 236 W. 27th Street, 4th floor. Please RSVP by May 13 to Kgoldstein@tandn.org or at 212-608-4320 ext. 400.

Free Skin Cancer Screenings:

In honor of National Melanoma / Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month, Memorial Sloan-Kettering is holding free skin cancer screenings on Thursday, May 23 from 4:00 - 7:00 pm, at the Rockefeller Outpatient Pavilion, 160 East 53rd Street, 10th Floor, between Lexington and Third Avenues. Risk factors for skin cancer include a family history of melanoma (two or more blood relatives); multiple atypical moles; and numerous actinic keratoses (scaly patches of skin, gray to pink in color, on sun-exposed areas of the body). By limited appointment only. To schedule an appointment, call 212.610.0772 on Tuesday, May 14 at 9:00 am.

Search and Care Volunteer Open House:

Ever wonder who's helping that frail elderly person in your building – the one who seems to have no friends or family? In East Harlem, Yorkville and Carnegie Hill, that's the role of Search and Care – a local nonprofit social service agency, providing free help for seniors who want to stay in their apartments but have a hard time managing on their own.

Volunteers help in many essential ways and if you're a caring New Yorker who wants to feel rewarded by giving a little time as a volunteer, then come to their open house! Come if you're a pet lover, or are just curious to learn how a 40 year old community non-profit has made it possible for thousands of your neighbors to remain in the community as long as safely feasible. As one of their intergenerational multicultural volunteers, you might choose to visit with a neighborhood senior, or walk a dog for an elder (who's afraid of losing their beloved pet), or read to a client who is legally blind, or help a frail senior get to and from doctor appointments, or shop for someone who is homebound.

If you're 18 or older (bilingual is a plus) and want to know if this would be a great way for you to give back, or if you want to learn about Search and Care's services, please RSVP to attend and bring a friend or neighbor. Refreshments will be served.

The open house will take place on Saturday, May 18th, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at St. Francis De Sales Church, 135 East 96th Street (down the stairs). RSVP to Robin at 212-289-5300 x203 or by email to strashun@searchandcare.org

6th Annual Shred Fest on May 19th:

Shred Fest is an annual event to help New Yorkers prevent identity theft while getting rid of unneeded papers. At Shred Fest you can safely shred papers containing personal information for free using shredding trucks and get free identity theft prevention tips. In addition, you can get a FREE paper shredder, donated by Staples, if you are one of the first five people to arrive with your papers at a Shred Fest location. Shred Fest will take place on Sunday, May 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at multiple locations throughout New York City, including Union Square's South Plaza, at East 14th Street and Union Square East. For additional locations or information, visit:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dca/html/news/shred_fest_nyc.shtml.

Recycling of Plastics Expanded in New York City:

New York City's recycling program has now been expanded to include recycling of all rigid plastics for the first time, including toys, hangers, shampoo bottles, coffee cups and food containers. The expansion of plastics recycling is part of the City's Solid Waste Management Plan and is made possible, in part, through a partnership with SIMS Municipal Recycling, whose recycling facilities are equipped to handle the broad range of plastic recycling. The recycling expansion will result in more than 50,000 additional tons of waste a year no longer ending up in landfills, and will generate savings to city taxpayers of almost \$600,000 each year in export costs.

For rigid plastics, it is recommended that New Yorkers should rinse before recycling.

Coinciding with the expanded recycling, New Yorkers will receive mailers that describe the expansion of the recycling program and include easy-to-understand illustrations of what they can recycle and how. The City will also send decals to landlords and homeowners to replace the current labels on their recycling bins. The new program has gone into effect as of the end of April, although the City won't begin enforcement until rules are adopted in July.

Release of Findings of Study of Irish-American Elderly in NYC:

On Monday, May 20, the Gallagher Initiative Conference will offer a presentation and discussion of the findings of the first study of Irish and Irish-American elderly residents in New York City. The presentation will take place from 9:00-11:30 a.m., at the American Irish Historical Society, 991 Fifth Avenue (between 80th and 81st Streets).

If you would like to attend, please RSVP to fass08@gmail.com (preferred); or 917.575.7158.

2nd Avenue Restaurant and Retail Week:

The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce that 29 local retail/service businesses and 26 restaurants are participating in this year's 2nd Avenue Restaurant and Retail Week, from June 1-8! These businesses are proud members of the 2nd Avenue community – joint them for special deals and discounts! To see who is participating, visit:

<http://2ndavenueshopper.wordpress.com/special-offers-events/2nd-ave-restaurant-retail-week/>

Second Avenue Subway “Ask the Experts”:

You are invited to attend the first MTA Second Avenue Subway Ask the Experts session on the evening of Tuesday, May 14th.

Ask the Experts is an informal session that gives attendees the opportunity to pose questions and raise issues directly to the subject matter experts, who in many cases can provide an answer right then and there.

To make the session more convenient, attendees can arrive and depart at any time from 6 to 8 p.m. In fact, we encourage those who would like to attend to arrive at a time past 6 p.m. to avoid the longest lines of the evening.

In addition to representatives staffing tables for each of the four station areas, Second Avenue Subway experts on the environment, the Good Neighbor Initiative, and Maintenance and Protection of Traffic will be on hand. Experts from city agencies including

Health, Transportation, Sanitation, Environmental Protection, Police, Small Business Services, and the Business Integrity Commission also will staff tables to answer your Second Avenue Subway-related questions. Only Second Avenue Subway-related questions will be addressed at this event.

Date: Tuesday, May 14th, 2013
Time: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Location: Marymount Manhattan College
221 E. 71st Street
Great Hall on the Ground Floor

Reservations are required. Capacity is limited to 200 people.

Please register online at <http://sasasktheexperts.eventbrite.com/> or call (646) 564-5866.

Photo ID required for entry.

Insurance Mediation for Homeowners and Businesses Impacted by Hurricane Sandy:

The New York State Department of Financial Services has established a regulation giving insurance claimants the right to request a mediation conference for disputes on claims resulting from Hurricane Sandy. The mediation process is available to homeowners and businesses with a claim for damage to real and/or personal property which occurred between October 26th and November 15th, 2012.

Claims are only eligible for mediation if:

- a) they were denied or partly denied, or
- b) there is a dispute over a settlement offer made by an insurer where the difference is \$1000 or more, or
- c) the insurer has not offered to settle within 45 days of receiving required documentation.

Mediation is not available on motor vehicle or flood insurance claims, claims the insurer has reason to believe are fraudulent, or where a suit has been filed.

To request mediation, contact your insurer, or contact the American Arbitration Association at:

American Arbitration Association
Storm Sandy Mediation Claims
120 Broadway, 15th Floor
New York NY 10271

The American Arbitration Association is in charge of the mediation process. They can also be contacted via email at Stormsandyny@adr.org or by phone at (855) 366-9767.

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:

- May 9, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- May 14, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- May 14, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 69 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- May 28, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- May 28, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 69 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- May 28, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- June 5, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
- June 5, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- June 5, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- June 6, 7 - 9:30 am, 90 Street & York Avenue – Van
- June 6, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- June 6, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- June 7, 9 - 10 am, 57 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
- June 7, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 Street and 3 Avenue – Van
- June 7, 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>.

Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan:

St. Nicholas Park Apartments is now accepting applications for 30 affordable 1 and 2 bedroom apartments under construction at 306 West 128th Street in the Central Harlem Section of Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$533 to \$1022 depending on income and unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$20,263 and \$51,540, depending on unit and family size. Preference will be given to Community Board 10 residents for 50% of units, mobility-impaired persons for 5% of units, visual- and/or hearing-impaired units for 2% of units, and City of New York municipal employees for 5% of units. Applicants who can document displacement by Hurricane Sandy and/or its related storms will receive preference for 25% of units. Preference for all units will go to New York City residents.

Applications may be downloaded from www.stnicholaspark.com or requested by regular mail from: St. Nicholas Park Apartments LP, 2214 Frederick Douglas Blvd., #386, New York NY 10026. Please include a self-addressed envelope with your request.

Completed applications must be returned by regular mail only to a post office box that will be listed on the application and must be postmarked by May 20, 2013. Applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified.

Harlem River Point North LLC is now accepting applications for 172 affordable studio, 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments under construction at 1951 Park Avenue and 121 East 131st Street in the East Harlem Section of Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$474 to \$1127 depending on income and unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$18,172 and \$59,820, depending on unit and family size. Preference will be given to Community Board 11 residents for 50% of units, mobility-impaired persons for 5% of units, visual- and/or hearing-impaired units for 2% of units, and City of New York municipal employees for 5% of units. Applicants who can document displacement by

Hurricane Sandy and/or its related storms will receive preference for 25% of units. Preference for all units will go to New York City residents.

Applications may be requested by visiting the website www.HRPNorth.com or by regular mail to: Harlem River Point North LLC, c/o P.O. Box 387, Triborough Station, New York, NY 10035. Please include a self-addressed envelope with your request.

Completed applications must be returned by regular mail only to a post office box that will be listed on the application and must be postmarked by June 27, 2013. Applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

Animal Protection

There are a number of important animal protection measures that I cosponsor and that are up for consideration in these final two months of the legislative session, and there seems to be more bipartisan interest in moving at least some of these bills than I have seen in past years. This year, therefore, represents a real opportunity to update our laws and ensure that New York State is creating a humane environment for both domesticated and wild animals. The key measures currently before the legislature include:

S1711a / A1769a (Grisanti / Maisel), which bans the sale and trade of shark fins. Shark finning is a particularly cruel practice that involves cutting off the fins of the shark and then throwing the mutilated shark back in the water. The shark is often still alive after the fin is removed, but is unable to swim, and will suffer through a slow death. Fortunately it appears likely this legislation will become law in New York State. It passed the Senate unanimously late last month, and similar legislation has passed in the Assembly in previous years, so hopefully the Assembly will pass it again this year.

S1776 / A775a (Fuschillo / Rosenthal), which would move animal cruelty crimes from the Agriculture and Markets Law into criminal statutes. This will make it easier to prosecute these crimes, as police and district attorneys are more familiar with the criminal code, and are therefore more likely to be aggressive in pursuing these kinds of violations. While the bill has not moved in either house yet, it does have significant co-sponsorship from members of both parties in the Senate.

S4799 / A1665a (Martins / Rosenthal), which would crack down on the operators of inhumane “puppy mills,” large-scale commercial dog breeding operations that are notorious for the unsanitary and inhumane conditions in which they keep the puppies they produce. This legislation would require licensure and inspection of all commercial pet dealers, and set standards for cage size, exercise, grooming and veterinary care. It would also establish rules regarding frequency and age of dogs for breeding, and prohibit licensure for anyone convicted of animal cruelty.

S.4987 / A1656 (Boyle / Rosenthal), which would establish humane standards for the confinement of farm animals. Both pigs and veal calves are currently frequently confined in pens and cages too small for them to even turn around, and in the case of calves, they may spend their entire lives in such confinement. This legislation would require that cages and pens be large enough for pigs and calves to stand, lie down, turn around, and extend their limbs.

In addition to these bills, I have been working with advocates and the sponsors of an additional Assembly bill to find a Senate sponsor with the best chance of advancing it. Since majority coalition members are much more likely to be able to move their bills, our goal is to find a sympathetic member of the majority to carry and push these bills through committee. This bill is:

A.3767 (Glick), which would end the sale, possession and transport of feral pigs. Feral pigs have become an invasive species with major negative impacts for agriculture across the country. Nationwide, feral pigs have caused more than \$1.5 billion in property damage. These pigs are often introduced to new areas by captive commercial hunting facilities, but then escape and breed in the wild.

I am hopeful that we will see passage of all of these important bills before the end of the legislative session in June.