

Liz Krueger

New York State Senate | 28th District



September 2015

Message from Liz...

Later this month, the Department of Labor is likely to approve the recommendations by the New York Wage Board to phase in a \$15-an-hour wage for fast food workers. This is an important step toward addressing income inequality for some of the lowest paid workers in New York. However, it also must be recognized that it is an incomplete step, both because of the long period over which the minimum wage will be phased in and because it only applies to one sector of the economy.

There is no question that the nearly 20,000 fast food workers in New York State deserve a raise. The average annual pay for fast food workers is less than \$16,000 a year. These low wages force many workers to rely on public assistance programs to meet basic needs - sixty percent of fast-food workers in New York are in families enrolled in at least one public assistance program, at a cost of \$700 million a year to taxpayers.

Unfortunately the wage board proposal addresses this problem very slowly. The recommended phase-in period calls for an increase in the wage in New York City from \$8.75 to \$10.50 on December 31, 2015, followed by annual increase of \$1.50, which would bring the minimum wage in New York City to \$15 at the end of 2018. For the rest of the state there would be smaller increases of \$1.00, so the \$15 wage would not go into effect until July of 2021. It is highly likely that by that point, that increase will look a lot less significant as the overall cost of living continues to grow.

I am also concerned about the need to address wage inequality in other sectors of the economy as well. Home health care is just one example of a sector with wages that are frequently below subsistence level, where many workers make \$10 an hour or less. These critical workers who take care of seniors and people with disabilities also deserve a raise.

A number of articles covering the wage board have also pointed out that many state workers make less than \$15 an hour. Food service workers in some state offices currently make \$9.31 an hour, and more than 16,000 workers earn less than \$15 an hour. Owners of fast food restaurants have not been shy in pointing to this discrepancy when arguing against a wage increase for their workers, and I have to say they have a point. The solution to this problem needs to be an across the board minimum wage increase.

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Governor Cuomo has said that he will push for legislation creating a standard minimum wage of \$15, which I believe is the right answer, and I look forward to working with him to aggressively push for passage of such legislation in 2016.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

LLC Loophole

This summer has seen a couple of interesting developments in efforts to overturn the loophole in campaign finance regulations that allows Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) to be treated as individuals for purposes of campaign donations. As I have discussed in the past, because one individual can control multiple LLCs, this loophole effectively allows unlimited campaign donations.

In July I joined the NYU Brennan Center for Justice and a bipartisan list of co-plaintiffs in suing the state Board of Elections over the LLC loophole. I was joined in the suit by SUNY Albany Professor Gerald Benjamin, my Democratic colleagues Daniel Squadron and Brian Kavanagh, former Republican State Senator John Dunne and former Republican Assembly candidate Maureen Koetz.

The suit challenges the decision by the State Board of Elections last April to uphold the LLC loophole. We allege that the Board misinterprets both campaign finance law and the laws creating LLCs by treating them as individuals, instead of corporations. Furthermore, by misinterpreting campaign finance law, the LLC loophole distorts the election process. As I stated in my affidavit, “the prominence of LLC contributions has a significant effect on the willingness and ability of people to run for office. I have seen many people who would have made excellent public servants lose or decline to even run because they were unable or unwilling to raise enough large campaign contributions.”

Also in July, there was a more surprising legal development that could undermine the LLC loophole from within the Board of Elections. The Chief Enforcement Counsel for the Board (who is an independent official appointed directly by the Governor, not by the Board) filed suit against Shirley Patterson, an unsuccessful Brooklyn Assembly candidate, alleging that she knowingly took contributions funneled through different LLCs that exceeded the legal limit from a single individual.

There are reports that a settlement has been reached in the case, though no details have been released. While the target of this case is a relative small-fry in the grand scheme of LLC contribution abuse, the case could provide a precedent for going after much bigger targets in the future. One of the most active users of LLCs to funnel donations to candidates is Glenwood Management, which is a major donor to the Governor and many legislators of both parties, and has been linked to both the Sheldon Silver and Dean Skelos criminal cases. LLCs that have the same address as Glenwood management also gave more than the legal limit for an individual to Shirley Patterson, although they are not mentioned in the case brought by the Chief Enforcement Counsel.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Senator Liz Krueger's Ninth Annual Senior Resource Fair:

My ninth annual Senior Resource Fair will take place Thursday, October 22nd from 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El, One East 65th Street (at Fifth Avenue). Over 500 people attended last year's event. This year we will have over 50 exhibitors from non-profits and city and state agencies with information for Older Adults. Admission is free. Light refreshments will be served. NO RSVP NECESSARY. For further information, call [\(212\) 490-9535](tel:2124909535).

Update on Efforts to Fight the Proposed Marine Transfer Station (MTS):

I have reached out to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to follow up on the comments submitted regarding permits for the East 91st Street Marine Transfer Station. It is my understanding that a final decision on whether to hold a hearing will be made later this month. Depending on whether or not DEC agrees to hold a hearing, a decision on permit renewal could follow shortly thereafter. I continue to argue that given the serious issues regarding air quality and the health and safety of surrounding communities, a public hearing should be held before any final decision on permit renewal is made.

Update on Homelessness Issues:

My office has received a growing number of calls regarding homeless people who exhibit symptoms of serious mental illness. From talking to colleagues I know this is not unique to my district. Many advocates, particularly street homeless outreach programs such as Common Ground, have explained that it can be difficult for the City's shelter system to engage with and provide services for mentally ill homeless individuals.

In an effort to address concerns raised both about shelters in the area and about street homelessness, my fellow electeds and I have reached out to the Mayor and Department of Homeless Services with a series of letters and have organized several meetings with concerned community residents, neighborhood organizations, and local businesses to gather information to bring to the attention of city agencies. We are working with the City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the NYPD, Community Boards 5 and 6, and other relevant agencies to improve the safety of the community, de-stigmatize the issues surrounding homelessness, and better coordinate services for homeless people.

The causes of homelessness must also be addressed at the policy level. There have been increased numbers of mentally ill adults released from state institutions, decrepit adult homes and prisons – all determined to be unacceptable placements. But not nearly enough has been done to assure they are re-housed with services in our communities since the successful supportive housing system needs an additional 30,000 units over the next decade to address demand.

I am pleased that the de Blasio administration has significantly increased eviction prevention funding, is committed to dramatically increasing the city's supply of affordable housing, and plans to provide an additional 5,200 permanent units for homeless families and rental assistance for 2,100 adults this year. In addition, the mayor recently announced a \$22 million NY Safe plan designed to connect mentally ill individuals who exhibit violent behavior to appropriate services. But more must be done at both the city and state level, particularly in the area of expanding supportive housing for people with mental illness, if we are going to truly address this crisis.

If you see a homeless person who needs assistance, call 311 to connect them with a street outreach team. If you witness any criminal activity, call 911. And please be sensitive to the fact that these are people suffering from chronic illness and poverty who need help.

Hiring Fair for Veterans:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation is hosting Hiring for Heroes: A Free Hiring Fair for Veterans, Transitioning Service Members, and Military Spouses on Thursday, September 10th from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At 8:30 a.m. there will be a job seeker employment workshop, and the hiring fair will begin at 10 a.m. The fair will take place at the 69th Regiment Lexington Avenue Armory, 68 Lexington Avenue, between E 25th & E 26th St. To register online visit <http://www.uschamberfoundation.org/event/new-york-city-hiring-fair>. For more information, email events@manhattancc.org or call 212-473-7875.

LiveOn NY Benefits Check-up at Kips Bay Library:

On Thursday, September 17 from 1 to 5 p.m. LiveOn NY will be offering a benefits check-up at Kips Bay Public Library, 446 Third Avenue at 31st Street. Benefits specialists will be on-site to provide information on benefit programs including Medicare, SCRIE, SNAP (Food Stamps), HEAP and others. To assist with determination of eligibility and your application, please bring copies of relevant documents that verify the following: identity; address; total household income (Social Security award letter, Income Tax Returns); housing expenses (Rent/mortgage); utilities; and medical expenses. For more information call (347) 815-5930 or email: benefits@liveon-ny.org.

Symposium on Rheumatoid Arthritis:

In collaboration with the Arthritis Foundation, the Hospital for Special Surgery is sponsoring a Symposium – Essentials in Managing Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA): Treatments, Fatigues, Nutrition and Joint Protection, on Thursday, September 17th, 5:30-7:30 pm at the Richard Menschel Education Center, 535 East 70th Street, 2nd Floor. Leading experts in the field will present and engage with the participants. Register online at www.hss.edu/pped. For more information, contact Alana Perlstein at 212-606-1613 or pped@hss.edu.

Senior Visiting and Home Shopping Service:

The Carter Burden Center for the Aging offers a variety of programs for individuals age 60 or over living north of East 59th Street. Grocery Shopping Assistance provides assistance getting to the supermarket or delivers your groceries. Friendly Visiting will send a visitor to your home for company and conversation. Telefriend provides weekly phone calls to check in and talk. For more information call Melissa Radin at (212) 423-9665, Ext 419.

Upcoming Pet Adoption Events:

Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) is sponsoring several Pet Adoption events around my Senate district in September. ACC's Mobil Adoption Center will be at Petco Union Square, 860 Broadway at 17th Street, on Saturday September 19th from 1-4 p.m. and Sunday September 20th from 1-5 p.m.

ACC will also have pets for adoption at Biscuits and Bath eastside locations:

- Saturday, September 19th from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. – Biscuits and Bath, Midtown East, 1035 Third Avenue at East 61st Street.
- Saturday, September 26th, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. – Biscuits and Bath, Sutton Place, 1064 First Avenue at East 58th Street.

Information on Avoiding Common Scams and Identity Theft:

I receive frequent calls from constituents regarding concerns about scams and identity theft. Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office has put together an excellent "Smart Seniors" Guide with information on common scams, internet safety and identity theft, among other issues. Much of this information will be valuable to non-seniors as well. To see a copy of the guide, visit <http://www.ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/Smart-Seniors.pdf>.

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.
- **SCRIE Clinics:** call 212-218-0503 ext. 6 for assistance in applying or recertifying for the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program. The SCRIE clinic is open to tenants city-wide. *Please note that due to the volume of calls, it sometimes takes up to two weeks for staff to respond to messages.*
- **Eviction Prevention:** Walk-in clinic, every third Monday of the month, from 10am to 1pm at 331 East 70th Street, for tenants who live, work, or go to school on Manhattan's East Side above 59th Street and on Roosevelt Island.
- **Advance Directives:** volunteer attorneys may be able to assist you with one-on-one counseling and individualized drafting of Advance Directives including Health Care Proxies, Living Wills, Powers of Attorney, and simple, low-asset Wills. If you are interested in being screened for a possible appointment, call the intake hotline at 212-218-0503 ext 4.
- **Health Care Access/Medicare/Medicaid:** call 212-218-0503 ext 3. Find out about Medicare Savings Programs, Medicaid home care, Medicare Part D, Medicaid Spend-down, EPIC and if you are eligible for Medicaid.

Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan:

My Micro NY is now accepting applications for 14 newly constructed micro studio apartments at 335 East 27th Street in the Kips Bay neighborhood in Manhattan. Rents for these apartments range from \$950 to \$1492 depending on unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$34,526 and \$89,830, depending on family size. Preference will be given to Community Board 6 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/189.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: LESPMHA MICRO, 228 East 3rd Street, New York, NY 10009.

Completed applications must be submitted online or returned by regular mail only to the post office box that will be listed on the application. Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by November 2, 2015. *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:

September 16, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
September 16, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
September 16 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
September 17, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
September 17, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
September 22, 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
September 22, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
September 22, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
October 1, 7 – 9 am, 90 Street and York Avenue - Van
October 1, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
October 1, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
October 2, 9 - 10 am, 57 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
October 2, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 Street and 3 Avenue – Van
October 2, 12:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
October 7, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
October 7, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
October 7, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus

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.