



Assembly Member Dick Gottfried **Community Update**

Manhattan Community Board 4, Oct. 1, 2014

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West Side Tenants Conference

On Saturday, November 1, the 10th Annual West Side Tenants Conference will be at Fordham University School of Law, (140 West 62 Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues).

This is an important conference for tenants to learn about housing issues like illegal hotels, 421-a tax exemptions for developers, and the upcoming 2015 rent law battle in Albany.

Next year will be especially important. The rent laws that protect two million New Yorkers (including some in the suburbs and upstate) will expire in 2015 unless the State Legislature renews them. Everyone needs to get involved to keep and strengthen tenant protections. We need to repeal vacancy deregulation, which has allowed landlords to remove at least 400,000 apartments from the rent-regulation system. These apartments need to be returned to rent-stabilized status.

If we don't strengthen the rent laws, we will continue to lose affordable apartments faster than we can build them.

For more information or to RSVP, call 212-541-5996 or visit www.hcc-nyc.org.

Stopping Pharmacies from Overcharging Patients for Their Medical Records

After an Upper East Side pharmacy was caught charging sick 9/11 responders \$150 simply for printing out copies of their prescription records, I am introducing a bill to change New York State health law to prevent this abusive practice.

Currently, State law guarantees patients "at-cost" access to medical records sought from healthcare providers like doctors and hospitals, but pharmacies have not been included. My bill will extend the law to require that pharmacies also provide at-cost access to prescription records.

The pharmacy in question is located steps from Mt. Sinai Hospital where many enrollees in the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund receive treatment, so it fills a lot of their prescriptions. The patients need their records to support their compensation claims. The pharmacy has since backed down. But I'm moving forward with the bill so this never happens again.

People's Climate March

In September, the People's Climate March in New York City made history as the largest-ever climate march, with more than 400,000 participants. Two days before President Obama and other world leaders would be meeting at the U.N. summit on climate change in New York, we took to the streets to demand action to preserve the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It was a day to show the world the people power of the international movement to promote policies that keep fossil fuels in the ground, create meaningful jobs, and put our communities back to work building the infrastructure we really need to address the climate crisis.



With Rep. Nydia Velazquez, NYS Senator Brad Hoylman, US Senator Bernie Sanders, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer People's Climate March.

Tenants of Saint Joseph's Immigrant Home taken to Housing Court

Since February, my office has been working to maintain the long-term tenancies of more than two dozen women who reside at Saint Joseph's Immigrant Home, run by the Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception, a Catholic Charities agency, located in the Clinton Special District. Saint Joseph's stated purpose is to provide affordable housing to young women, students and immigrants otherwise unable to afford safe accommodations. In June, many of the tenants were hit with a 50% rent increase. The religious order has consistently rebuffed efforts to negotiate or seek alternative sources of revenue.

When the tenants refused to pay the increase, they received eviction notices. On September 16, (*con't*)

27 of the women, nearly all of them senior citizens and immigrants, were served with Housing Court papers with a hearing date of September 22. Because of the very short notice, they were unable to obtain legal representation by the hearing date. Working with Housing Conservation Coordinators and the Goddard Riverside SRO Law Project, each tenant presented a letter requesting an adjournment until November so that they could get legal representation. Eli Szenes-Strauss from my office and staff members of Borough President Brewer, State Senator Hoylman, and Councilmember Johnson accompanied them to court for support.

It is shameful that people, let alone more than two dozen elderly immigrants, are forced from their long-term home. Here, it is legal because the housing is operated by a non-profit organization and it is exempt from the Rent Stabilization laws. I plan to introduce legislation in Albany to repeal this exemption.

Rally against Illegal Hotels



Speaking at the City Hall rally against illegal hotels with Brooklyn Assembly Member Walter Mosley, Assembly member Linda Rosenthal, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Councilmember Ben Kallos, housing advocates and other elected officials

In September I joined dozens of elected officials, tenants, and affordable housing advocates at a City Hall rally against illegal hotels. With Airbnb and similar online websites fostering illegal short-term hotel use of apartments, this problem has reached critical proportions.

There is danger to the buildings, tourists and neighbors when these apartments are rented but do not have proper fire safety controls such as means of egress and sprinklers. People coming and going as much as tourists do and the behavior of tourists who are unaware that they are not renting a hotel room undermines quality of life for tenants causes unsavory or outright illegal activities in residential apartment buildings all across the city. I sponsored the 2010 illegal hotel law.

A new coalition of affordable housing activists, Share Better (the "SB" in the posters in the photo), has been formed to fight this. We're calling for tougher enforcement of existing laws against illegal hotels and apartment-brokering arrangements, and will fight to block any measures to cripple or repeal the law against short-stay rentals in residential apartment buildings.

Pinnacle Group Tenants and Former Tenants Win Settlement

If the Pinnacle Group is your landlord or former landlord, you may have money coming to you.

As part of a settlement of a class action lawsuit against the landlord Pinnacle Group, any tenant or former tenant of this landlord can file a claim against the landlord for rent overcharge and harassment. The harassment or overcharge has to have happened between July 11, 2004 and April 27, 2010. To make a claim of violation of rules for recent rent increases, eviction proceedings, and apartment repairs, the incident has to have happened after April 27th, 2010. The deadline to submit a claim is on December 31.

If you, or anyone you know, is interested in filing a claim or getting more information, please contact my community office and my staff will help you: 212-807-7900, GottfriedR@nysa.us.

NYCHA Agrees to Change Downsizing Policies

On August 19, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) agreed to make major changes to its downsizing policies as a result of a court settlement in the "Alameda" case.

Major changes were made in NYCHA's policies that require tenants with more than one extra bedroom to transfer to a smaller apartment.

If a tenant with a disability is told to move to a smaller apartment, the tenant will now be entitled to request a reasonable accommodation to let them to remain in their apartment if the disability makes it difficult to move.

NYCHA must now consider all requests regarding adding a family member to the household and to respond in writing. Tenants with only one extra bedroom may be asked to transfer voluntarily, but the transfer will not be required.

If you would like more information, or feel like NYCHA has not complied with the new rules, please contact my community office: 212-807-7900; GottfriedR@nysa.us.

Landlord Harassing Tenants at 222-224 West 21 Street

Since April, the tenants at 222-224 West 21st Street have faced a campaign of false eviction notices, intimidation, grossly disruptive construction without permits, removal of fire safety measures, a diminution of services, and a changing of locks without notice or key replacement. Most recently, the building has been without gas since August 25, and the landlord has hidden this from new market-rate tenants by installing electric stoves in newly renovated apartments.



At a press conference on Sunday, Sept. 14, at the building, tenants shared their experiences over the past half year and the fear and anger they feel over the possibility that they could be forced out or unable to tolerate the living conditions at some point. Cher Carden (speaking), a spokesperson for the Tenants Association, spoke about recovering from cancer in her home and how the loss of gas had disrupted her medically necessary diet. Steve Schaeffer (right) and others spoke about the impending start of heating season on October 1, and the concern that the gas-powered heating system would not be working in time.

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, State Senator Brad Hoylman, Councilmember Corey Johnson and I spoke at the rally, demanding a return to lawful living conditions for the tenants on 21st Street and an end to the epidemic of landlord harassment and losing Rent Stabilization protection that is occurring throughout New York City.

We are losing affordable apartments faster than we can build them. We need much stronger enforcement and penalties for harassment. The State Division of Housing and Community Renewal needs major change so it can effectively fight the illegal deregulation and harassment that is decimating our city's affordable housing stock.

Single Payer Health Coverage: Speaking at Weill Cornell Medical Center

On September 24, I was invited to speak about my "NY Health" universal single payer health coverage legislation at the David Rogers Health Policy Colloquium at the Weill Cornell Medical Center. The audience was made up of approximately 50 Cornell Medical School faculty and students, hospital and medical school administrators, nurses and pastoral counselors, residents and fellows.

I presented an overview of our current health system and its fundamental problems for patients, health care providers, employers and taxpayers, and explained how a single payer system would improve care, lower costs, and be paid for fairly.

I was pleased to be welcomed by my good friend Dr. Oliver Fein, Professor of Clinical Medicine and Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical Center.

After my presentation and a series of questions from the audience, Dr. Fein presented me with the prestigious David E. Rogers Medallion. The late Dr. Rogers had an extraordinary career in medical institutions, was for many years the head of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and later in his career he returned to Cornell as the Walsh McDermott University Professor of Medicine. I was privileged to work with and learn from Dr. Rogers when he was chair of the New York State AIDS Advisory Council. It is a great honor to receive this award.

As many of you know, for many years I have been a champion of single payer. As chair of the Assembly Health Committee I will soon announce a series of hearings that I will be convening in major cities throughout the state on the issue and the bill I am sponsoring to make single payer a reality in New York State.

"Fast Food Forward" Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage and Fight for Workers' Right to Organize

In September, I marched with hundreds of New Yorkers to support the Fast Food Campaign, a nationwide effort for a livable wage and the right to organize for workers in the fast food industry.

On Sept. 30, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed an executive order to raising the City "living wage" to \$13.13 from \$11.90, for workers who do not receive benefits. This would cover about 18,000 more workers, includ-

ing those working in retail or fast-food jobs making the state minimum wage of \$8 an hour. Workers who receive benefits such as health insurance will earn \$11.50 an hour, compared with \$10.30 before.

The Mayor's order will not affect businesses with gross income below \$3 million, or housing projects with more than 75 percent affordable units, or manufacturers.

It affects the retail stores located in buildings that get more than \$1 million in city subsidies. Previously, as well as other projects and business.

I will support Mayor de Blasio's efforts in Albany for state legislation to let New York City increase the minimum wage for all New York City workers.

Hopefully New York City will lead the way and all around the country the minimum wage will be increased so that workers can support their families.



With Senator Hoylman and hundreds of New Yorkers in the "Fast Food Forward" march demanding livable wages and the right to organize for fast food industry workers.

NYU/Bellevue Primary Care Residency Program

For many years, as chair of the Assembly Health Committee, I have met with third year primary care internal medicine residents working at Bellevue Hospital, as part of their Health Policy training. It's great that the training for this group of young doctors includes studying how health policies are made by government. Each year they travel to Albany to lobby the executive and legislative branches of New York State government on health care issues they have chosen. This year I spoke with them on September 23. I talked about my role as chair of the Assembly Health Committee in shaping New York State's health laws, budget and policies. I also spoke about several issues, especially my "NY Health" bill, to adopt a universal "single payer" health plan. (If you would like in-

formation about the "NY Health" bill, contact my community office: 212-807-7900; GottfriedR@nysa.us.)

NYC Sanitation Dept. is Hiring

The NYC Department of Sanitation has announced that it will be holding a written civil service exam in preparation for hiring new sanitation workers. This is the first time in seven years that the exam is being offered. It will be in February 2015 (the exact date is not set yet). The time to apply is Oct. 1-31, 2014.

These are good paying jobs, with great benefits, with many opportunities for advancement to supervisory and management positions in the future. The educational requirement is a high school diploma or equivalent.

Men and women who meet the demands will help the Big Apple to shine. To apply for the exam visit: www.nyc.gov/examsforjobs.

Celebrating Clinton Community Garden's 30th Anniversary



On September 30, I attended a wonderful event celebrating the 30th anniversary of Clinton Community Garden's official designation by New York City as permanent parkland, with gardeners Debbie Mullins, Andy Padian, Annie Chadwick, and Sen. Brad Hoylman and Councilmember Corey Johnson. Located on W. 48 Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, it was the first community garden ever to become a New York City public park. Back then, I worked with dedicated and determined Hell's Kitchen residents and other elected officials like then-Councilmember Ruth Messinger to help realize that vision in 1984, and it was particularly gratifying to salute the community members on this milestone occasion this month.