



*Assembly Member Dick Gottfried*

## Community Update

*Manhattan Community Board 4, February 2014*

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**Assembly Member  
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### **Moving State Primaries to June**

In 2012, a federal court ordered that New York's primaries for federal elections (Congress) be held in June, so absentee ballots for the November election could be prepared in time to get them to overseas military personnel as required by federal law. The Assembly also wanted to move the regular primary (for non-federal offices, like the state legislature) from September to June, so there would only be one primary day. But the State Senate refused to do that.

The split primary caused confusion and a drop in voter participation.

In January, the Assembly again passed a bill to consolidate the state and federal primaries so that they are both held in June. Holding a single primary day would encourage voter participation, save taxpayers almost \$50 million, and make sure our troops have ample time to return their absentee ballots.

### **Assembly Passes the Women's Equality Act Again**

The Assembly passed the Women's Equality Act (WEA) for the second time. I am proud to co-sponsor this important legislation, which covers a broad range of critical issues such as housing, employment and wage discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence, human trafficking, and reproductive rights.

In 2013, the state Senate refused to pass all 10 points of the bill, specifically rejecting the measure that guarantees New Yorkers the federal protections of *Roe v. Wade*. I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that the long overdue WEA becomes law.

### **Universal Pre-Kindergarten and After School Programs**

At Mayor de Blasio's request, Bronx Assembly Member Luis Sepulveda recently introduced legislation that would authorize New York City to increase taxes on taxpayers making \$500,000 or more to raise revenue for early childhood education and after-school programs. The bill increases would

sunset after five years. I have signed on as a sponsor of the bill.

Pre-K helps children start out with a stronger foundation for education and opportunity. Working families rely on pre-kindergarten and after-school programs to provide them with the flexibility they need to provide for their children. Economists have shown that these programs ease economic stress on families and benefit society as a whole. I believe that it is reasonable for us to ask the most fortunate among us to contribute a little bit more of their income so that we can make New York a better and more equitable place to live.

Without this revenue, funding for pre-K will be uncertain from year to year and will come from reducing funding for other important programs.

### **Education Funding in the 2014 Budget**

Recently, several of my colleagues and I wrote to Governor Cuomo to express urgent concerns over the funding inequities in our education system. State aid to education has not kept up with rising costs. Ever since the financial collapse of 2008-09, class sizes have grown, and vital programs have diminished.

Schools have seen dramatic cutbacks in art, music, AP courses, foreign languages, technical education, tutoring and counseling services, and seats for pre-K and Kindergarten. If we continue down this path, our children will lack the skills and preparation for higher education and the workforce. I look forward to working with my fellow legislators to ensure that we do everything we can to ensure a fair and equitable level of funding for schools in our State.

### **Emergency Stairwell Public Address Systems in High-Rise Buildings**

In January, during a three-alarm fire in the Strand apartment building on West 43 Street, many residents attempted to escape using the building stairs. Overcome by smoke in the stairwell, one man died.

This death was preventable. Because of the "fireproof" construction of the building, the tenants would have been safer if they had remained in their

apartments. If there had been an emergency public address system in the stairwell, residents could have been given instructions and information such as which stairwells to use and whether they should evacuate or return to their apartments. In New York City, emergency stairwell public address systems are required for all commercial buildings over 125 feet tall and built in or after 2009.

I will be introducing a bill to apply this requirement to comparable residential buildings, in New York City and elsewhere in the state. The bill will also include a comparable provision for commercial buildings statewide, through the state fire code.

## Recognizing NYPD Heroes

This month I sent my thanks to a police officer who was honored by the Tenth Precinct for outstanding service. Officer Eric Rivera's work has made our community a safer place to live, work, and visit.

In late December, a domestic dispute escalated and the police were called. Upon arriving, Officer Rivera was confronted by an intense argument between a mother and her son. After the mother revealed her son was hiding a weapon, he immediately began to flee. Despite the potential danger, Officer Rivera pursued the son. Thanks to his bravery, the son was apprehended and charged with concealing a loaded firearm.

I appreciate the dedication, compassion, and courage the NYPD officers put into keeping our City safe. I applaud the commander of the Tenth Precinct, Captain David Miller, for having the "Cop of the Month" program.

## Affordable Food Shopping in Hell's Kitchen

As high-priced development in Hell's Kitchen has increased, affordable food markets are losing ground. On January 1, Stile's Farmers Market lost its space of more than 15 years to an impending development. The market has yet to locate an alternative space. This has outraged many neighborhood residents who have relied on the market for fresh affordable produce.

My staff is working to help Stiles Market and community residents find an alternative sustainable space for the Market. We asked the Port Authority about the status of the long-time vacant space which was formerly Project Find's Coffee House Senior Center (551 Ninth Avenue). It's located only one block away from the Market's original site. The conversation between Stile's Farmers Market and the Port Authority is continuing.

## Nightlife and Our Community

Over the past few months, residents have complained about the proliferation of nightlife in our community. Many nightlife establishments are truly bad neighbors. With the help of Community Board 4, community groups and other elected officials, I work on these issues with the New York State Liquor Authority (SLA), the police, and other City agencies toward striking a balance between businesses and community.

In mid-December, I wrote to the SLA, with NY State Senator Brad Hoylman, asking for a denial of an application for a new liquor license for Fairytail Lounge at 500 West 48th Street. This nightlife establishment has been the subject of significant complaints from surrounding residential neighbors and the owner of Fairytail has taken little or no action to mitigate the concerns.

## Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen Business Improvement District (BID)

I am happy that the Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen BID was signed into law in December. In November of 2013, I submitted testimony to the New York City Council Finance Committee in support of the proposed BID. I supported Community Board 4's requests for the BID to ensure transparency in its operations, cooperate with the community, preserve the diversity of our neighborhoods, and appoint residential tenants to its Board of Directors. I am encouraged that Board 4's recommendations have been adopted into the BID structure and policy.

## Do Not Call Registry

Signing up for the "Do Not Call" Registry will prohibit calls to you by telemarketers who do not have an existing relationship with you. I encourage you to sign up today if you haven't already done so.

Here are some tips to protect yourself from scammers:

- Identify the caller and his/her company. Ask for his/her address and phone number.
- Only give out personal information if you initiate the call to a reputable company.
- If you're interested in an offer, hang up and call the company back. Verify their legitimacy or do some research on the internet or by asking friends and relatives before you call back.

You can sign up for the Do Not Call registry at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) or by calling 888-382-1222.