

Senator Adriano Espaillat: February 5, 2014 Update

Contact Info: David Baily, Regional Director
(212) 544-0173 / dbaily@adrianoespaillat.org
5030 Broadway, Room 701, New York, NY 10034



Espaillat speaks out against “reckless and aggressive” bikers: In the wake of yet another episode of lawless carousing by motorcycle gangs, this time on Broadway in front of the Ortiz Funeral Home, Senator Espaillat has introduced legislation that would make it illegal for bikers to do stunts like wheelies in traffic. Another bill would require groups of 50 or more motorcyclists to obtain a permit from the NYPD. “Anyone who thinks performing risky maneuvers in the middle of traffic is a good idea should have their license suspended so they understand the consequences of their actions,” Sen. Espaillat said. “These drivers have placed pedestrians and other motorists in danger, and continue to illegally intimidate others,” he added. “We are fed up with conditions that make residents feel like they're living in the ‘Wild West.’”



Fighting Against Tenant Harassment: Following constituent complaints to our office, the New York State Division of Housing & Community Renewal is investigating A & E Real Estate Holdings for double-digit rent increases at a number of its properties in our district. One resident of 217 Haven Avenue complained of a new lease with a 30% increase on their two-bedroom apartment; another reported a 92.6% increase on her apartment, also two bedrooms. “I’m excited that the state housing agency will be taking action in the near future,” said Espaillat, who noted that 19 families were affected by the rent hike. Residents at 730 Riverside Drive and at various addresses in Harlem also are preparing to sue A&E Real Estate Holdings over improper rent increases. If you believe that your rent has been increased unfairly, please contact our office at (212) 544-0173.

NYS Tenant Protection Unit Strengthens Safeguards: Again following constituent complaints, Sen Espaillat pushed for the DHCR to investigate landlords allegedly scamming immigrant tenants. Earlier this month, Governor Cuomo announced a major settlement agreement that will help make communities more just and affordable by ending the harassment and intimidation of mainly Spanish-speaking immigrant tenants in nearly 1,800 apartments within 49 buildings in Harlem, Washington Heights, Brooklyn and the South Bronx. The steps outlined in the unprecedented agreement between New York State’s Tenant Protection Unit (TPU) and Castellan Real Estate Partners/Liberty Place Property Management include monitoring of the landlord’s practices for up to three years, the establishment of a fund to compensate mistreated tenants, the return of tenants that had been wrongfully removed from their homes and requirement that all future communication between landlord and tenants be conducted in both English and Spanish. Senator Espaillat, who serves as the ranking member of the Senate Housing, Construction and Community Development Committee, said, “landlord harassment is driving tenants from their homes, and is a contributing factor for the critical shortage of affordable housing in New York City. The use of predatory harassment tactics against low-income immigrants is shocking and reprehensible. I applaud the Tenant Protection Unit for continuing to fight these abuses. Governor Cuomo’s actions will help safeguard vulnerable New Yorkers throughout the city, and I thank him for standing up for rent-regulated tenants.”



Senator Espaillat Opposes GOP’s Desire to Strip AG Schneiderman’s Control Over Housing Money: After New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman successfully fought for \$613 million as New York State’s share of a settlement with JPMorgan Chase, New York Senate Republicans are arguing the funds should go to the state treasury, as opposed to be allocated to housing non-profits that assist affected families. As Ranking Member of the Senate Housing Committee, Senator Espaillat will vigorously oppose any effort to impede the Schneiderman-Cuomo agreement and inject politics into urgently needed foreclosure assistance.

George Washington Bridge Updates:

- **“Bridgegate”**: In the wake of the PANYNJ scandal regarding lane closures at the GWB, Sen. Espailat is looking into reforms of the beleaguered authority: the bifurcated management structure which includes an Executive Director appointed by New York’s Governor and a Chairman appointed by New Jersey’s Governor, as well as the additional office of the Deputy ED. Sen. Espailat, who testified earlier this month before the Bergen Board of Freeholders, continues to push for transparency and equity in this and other matters involving the Port Authority.
- **Bus Station Redevelopment**: Although work has been ongoing, sight-unseen within the terminal since last fall, construction recently moved onto Ft. Washington Avenue, taking a portion of the street to provide safe passage once the trailer, which will contain ticketing, security, waiting and bathroom facilities during the renovation – is placed on the sidewalk. This is expected sometime in late February or early March, at which point the A-train exit within the terminal will close for the duration of the project. Sen. Espailat continues to push the PANYNJ for more community space, a REAL traffic study, and traffic enforcement agents near the terminal.

Congratulations to the West Side’s new Council Members Corey Johnson and Helen Rosenthal, and Mark Levine. This City’s greatest strength is its diversity. In it, we have the opportunity for a civic renaissance. This City is will improve by having such strong coalition in the City Council, not just in words, but in deeds.



Upcoming holiday, arts & other events in the community...

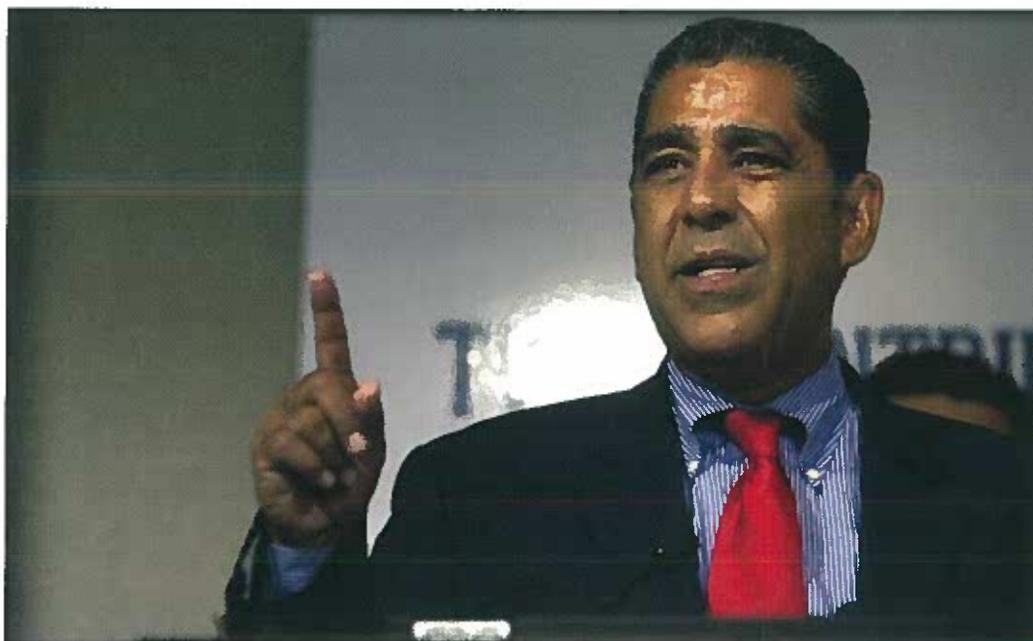
- **Housing Workshop on non-Primary Residence**: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Goddard Riverside’s SRO Law Project, and The Urban Justice Center host a monthly housing clinic. There will be a presentation, followed by a question and answer session, and an opportunity to meet with a staff attorney to provide free, bilingual legal advice on specific issues. The event is free and open to the public. At the Goddard Riverside Community Center, 593 Columbus Avenue (between 88th & 89th Streets). Wednesday, February 5th, from 6pm to 8pm. For questions, call the Urban Justice Center at 646-459-3017.
- **District 3 Community Education Council meeting**: Wednesday, February 5th at 6:30pm, 154 West 93rd Street, (Joan of Arc Building) Room 204.
- **Celebrate the Lunar New Year with NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer** at the Surrogate’s Courthouse, 31 Chambers Street. Wednesday, February 12th, 6pm – 8pm. To RSVP, email rsvp@comptroller.nyc.gov or call 212-669-4466.
- **NYPD / New York Cares Coat & Food Drive ***FINAL WEEK*****: Ongoing through February 7th. Not surprisingly, requests for coats have risen as temperatures have dropped. Please help! Local drop-off sites include the 26th, 28th, 30th, 32nd, 33rd & 34th Precincts, the Municipal Credit Union at 280 St. Nicholas Ave., Pinkberry at 93rd & Broadway, 414 Amsterdam or 2041 Broadway, NY Kids Club at 601-644 Amsterdam or 169 Amsterdam, and Janovic Plaza at 159 W. 72nd St. (<http://www.newyorkcares.org/coat-drive/map>.) If you need a coat, call the Coat Drive Hotline: 646-801-4022.
- **Got stuff you’re looking to get rid of, but don’t want to add to landfill?** Recycling is good, but reuse is even better. Veteran environmental activist Maggie Clarke suggests contacting Materials for the Arts, located in Long Island City (www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/mfta/html/home/home.shtml) or NYC Waste Match (www.wastematch.org/). They have listings of stuff that goes out every day.

We remember with fondness and respect, the great Pete Seeger, whose music helped bring peace and justice to a world divided, and whose passion for the environment helped to clean our precious Hudson River.

For more information, please visit www.espailat.nysenate.gov or call (212) 544-0173.

Adriano Espailat represents New York State’s 31st Senatorial District, stretching from Chelsea & Hell;’s Kitchen through the Upper West Side, Manhattanville, West Harlem, Hamilton Heights, Washington Heights, Inwood and Marble Hill.

State of the Union 2014: Adriano Espaillat Responds to President's Address



By Oscar Lopez, Latin Times

Immigration reform was one of the key issues addressed by President Barack Obama during his State of the Union speech on Tuesday night. "Let's get immigration reform done this year. Let's get it done. It's time," the President said emphatically. Politicians have come out to support President Obama's stance on immigration reform, including Senator Adriano Espaillat who represents parts of Upper Manhattan and the Bronx, and is Chair of the Senate Latino Conference. His statement can be seen below.

"For the more than 11 million undocumented Americans desperately seeking an end to our country's broken immigration laws, the President's declaration that we can trade gridlock for reform during this 'year of action' is a powerful signal that he understands the hardship they are experiencing.

President Obama has previously made clear that the progressive way forward includes a path to citizenship that ensures the American Dream is still a possibility for hardworking immigrants in our community. The pursuit of reform without this option will only continue the exploitation and abuse undocumented immigrants currently experience, and perpetuate their second-tier status in the U.S.

For undocumented immigrants, the daily injustice of our existing system is a chief cause of economic inequality, and limits their social mobility regardless of hard work and determination. With his additional focus on the urgent need for raising the minimum wage for low-income families, and expanding pre-K access, the President has unveiled a 2014 agenda that will have an immediate, tangible impact for Upper Manhattan and the Bronx."

NYS Senator Opposes GOP's Desire To Strip Attorney General's Control Over Housing Money

BY KEN LOVETT, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

State Sen. Adriano Espaillat ripped a plan by state Senate Republicans to strip Attorney General Eric Schneiderman of his control over hundreds of millions of dollars of the state's share of a federal housing settlement with JP Chase Morgan.

""Needlessly complicating a direct funding mechanism for vulnerable New Yorkers is the absolute last decision we should make," Espaillat (D-Manhattan) said in a statement. "As Ranking Member of the Senate Housing Committee, I will vigorously oppose any effort to impede the Schneiderman-Cuomo agreement and inject politics into urgently needed foreclosure assistance."

Espaillat was responding to the third item in my "Albany Insider" column that said the Senate GOP doesn't believe Schneiderman should control such a large sum of money with no legislative oversight or approval. Sources say the GOP is considering a bill barring the practice or including it in their soon-to-be-unveiled budget proposal.

"Black and Latino families disproportionately suffered during the Great Recession, as prospective minority homeowners were steered into sub-prime mortgages through aggressive 'redlining' practices," Espaillat said. "These unethical tactics preyed on aspirations of homeownership in communities that have struggled to gain access to credit for decades. As a result, the Black and Latino community has been hit hard and experienced shockingly higher foreclosure rates relative to the overall population. These victims viewed home ownership as a pathway to the middle class, and a means of building investment towards their children's future."

He credited Schneiderman with leading the charge to "hold the bad actors responsible for this meltdown accountable." He also backed the "sensible agreement" Schneiderman reached with Gov. Cuomo to split control of the \$163 million first installment. There is no such deal pertaining to the remainder of New York's \$613 million settlement share.

Cuomo recently told Crain's New York in an editorial board meeting that he also believes giving the AG's office--an office he once headed--control of such a vast sum of cash sets a "dangerous precedent."

State officials probe rent hikes in Washington Heights

The Division of Housing and Community Renewal is investigating whether landlord Doug Eisenberg and his building management company, A & E Real Estate Holdings, is illegally charging tenants hundreds of dollars more a month in rent.

By Simone Weichelsbaum, New York Daily News



State investigators are probing an uptown real estate mogul for hiking tenants' rent — by double digits rates — sparking a fierce housing battle in Washington Heights. The Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the state agency that monitors New York's rent regulation rules, is trying to determine whether Doug Eisenberg and his building management company, A & E Real Estate Holdings, can demand the exorbitant increases.

Rents at 217 Haven Ave. — a beautiful limestone pre-war building that overlooks the Hudson River — have skyrocketed. Some tenants griped they were facing increases between 30% and nearly 100% in less than a year. "They are evil," said one tenant, Magda Sheridan, 40, holding a copy of a newly issued lease that states her family's two-bedroom home will now cost \$4,035 instead of the previous \$2,095 per month. "This is all illegal." The owner would give Sheridan a "preferential rate" \$3,380 a month, an amount she refuses to pay.



Her neighbor, Judy Carvey, 44, said she now has to pay \$2,593 a month, for two years, in order to keep the two-bedroom apartment she shares with her husband and 15-year-old son. An increase of \$593 — or 30% — over what she had previously doled out. Residents reported their woes to state Sen. Adriano Espaillat (D-Washington Heights), who then contacted the state agency. “I’m excited that the state housing agency will be taking action in the near future,” said Espaillat, who noted that 19 families were affected by the rent hike.

A Division of Housing and Community Renewal spokeswoman declined to discuss an ongoing investigation. Tenants contend that their building is protected by a little-known city tax abatement that gives landlords a break on property taxes in exchange for stabilizing rents.

The building received the so-called J-51 status in 2005 under its previous landlord, city records show. A & E Real Estate Holdings bought the six-floor, 49-unit residence in 2012 for \$19.8 million, according to city real estate records.

Eisenberg insisted in several combative phone conversations that he is adhering to the state rent regulation laws.

“A&E, during its brief period of management of the buildings, has operated and offered lease renewals in accordance with the Rent Guidelines Board and DHCR regulations, and will continue to work with residents to ensure that any issues created by the previous owners and management company are resolved as quickly as possible,” Eisenberg said in a statement issued by attorney Jonathan Wachtel.

Housing law experts, however, said the hike didn’t smell legit. “A landlord can’t just double the rent without a legal basis to do so. Especially with existing tenants,” said Harvey Epstein, associate director of the Urban Justice Center. Ariel Property Advisors named A & E one of the top real estate buyers in 2012, when the company acquired a reported 15 buildings in 2012, totaling some 720 units.

Harlem tenants are also mobilizing to battle Eisenberg. Residents in 730 Riverside Dr. said they too are facing excessive rent hikes and are in talks with a lawyer planning to sue to stop the increase.