



Assembly Member Dick Gottfried

Community Update

Manhattan Community Board 4, May 7, 2014

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Assembly Member

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Single Payer Health Care: Rally in Albany Today Highlights Big Endorsements

Unions, advocates, doctors, nurses and fellow elected officials rallied today in support of my "New York Health" (A.5389A/S.2078A) legislation to create a universal, single payer health coverage plan. Speakers from SEIU 1199, the New York State Nurses Association, and medical professionals called for an end to the current profit-driven health insurance system. Local 32BJ SEIU, AFSCME DC 1707 are among several labor unions that have endorsed the bill since January. The Working Families Party has also recently endorsed.

Tomorrow, the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus will hold a press conference announcing its support for the bill. The 46-member Caucus includes State Senator Bill Perkins, sponsor of the bill in the Senate.

Union Square Park Pavilion Update: Good News and Bad News

Local elected officials wrote twice (attached) to the Mayor to ask him to cancel the contract with Chef Driven Market and return the Pavilion and the north plaza for community use.

The de Blasio administration recently notified us that it is finalizing a deal w/the restaurant. It's some very good news and some bad news.

First the good. After this season (2014), which ends around October 15, the restaurant will be out of the pavilion. That means that the pavilion will be available after that time for community use. The community should maximize its use of the space. Organizations that want to have programming there will be working with the Parks Department to make that happen.

The bad news is that the restaurant will still operate six months a year, from approximately April 15 through October 15 in the "outdoor seating area" just north of the pavilion. I am disappointed that we have not regained full use of the north plaza, as I oppose the private use of public space. This is an intrusion on the general public's use and enjoyment of this part of the northern plaza, and makes first amendment use of the north plaza virtually impossible during those months. The community should not assent to this and 1) make sure that the restaurant does not go beyond the 17' in the plaza that is in its agreement with the City and 2) let Mayor de Blasio know that we want all of the north plaza to be for public use. The northern plaza has historically been used for public events such as rallies/demonstrations and celebrations such as the Passport to Taiwan Day on May 25th. With a restaurant there, it means that all uses like that would have to go to the southern part of the park, which is not only not historic, but not as large or as good a space.

We are continuing to work on this and you should, too!

Minimize Noise Disruption in Hudson Yards

Construction work is continuing at Hudson Yards, and neighborhood residents have contacted my office to express concern over the noise disruptions. Construction has occurred past 6pm on a near-daily basis, and there are reports of jackhammering at 2am and 3am.

While nighttime work is necessary to ensure the safety of Amtrak workers, it is imperative that all possible steps be taken to mitigate quality-of-life disruptions. The work will continue for several years, so it's in everyone's interest to establish trust and neighborly relations between Related Construction and the long-term residents of Hell's Kitchen and West Chelsea.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler, State Senator Brad Hoylman, Councilmember Corey Johnson, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and I wrote to Related, asking them to commit in writing to oral promises they had made regarding noise mitigation, and requesting several new stipulations. We asked that they outfit jackhammers with noise mufflers, post written construction schedules in neighboring buildings so that residents can plan around noisy activities, and maintain communication with Amtrak to determine when nighttime construction may be safely moved to daytime hours.

Hudson Guild Quality of Life Forum

On Monday, April 21, I was on a panel at the Hudson Guild Quality of Life Forum along with Senator Brad Hoylman, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, and City Councilmember Corey Johnson. We answered questions about quality-of-life issues in our community. Community members raised concerns about issues surrounding bike safety, complaints about loud noises coming from construction throughout our neighborhood, and housing land use. The forum was well-attended, and I look forward to continue working with my colleagues to address quality-of-life issues in our neighborhoods.

Improving the Highline

I recently met with Jenny Gersten, the new Executive Director of Friends of the Highline. We discussed her plans for making the Highline more accessible to and integrated with the neighboring communities, and I was heartened to hear of her intention to expand the jobs and volunteer programming available to local teenagers.

The third section of the park, running from 30th to 34th street, is on schedule to open this fall. It will feature additional food vendors, space specifically designated for children to play, and a mix of landscaped and more "wild" foliage.

Good news! Prior to the opening of the final section, the elevator at 23rd Street that was knocked out by Hurricane Sandy will re-open early this summer.

Protection of Transgender Rights: Equality and Justice Lobbying Day in Albany

On April 29, Empire State Pride Agenda had its annual Equality and Justice Day, bringing hundreds of activists to Albany to lobby for LGBT rights. The focus of this year's efforts was urging legislators to pass GENDA, A.4226 (the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act), which I have been sponsoring since 2003. The day before, my office hosted "teach-ins" for fellow legislators to learn about what implementation of GENDA really means.

Transgender people – whose gender identity, appearance, behavior or expression differs from their genetic sex at birth – face discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and other areas of life, and they are particularly vulnerable to hate crimes. The transgender community is not protected under current state law.

The passage of GENDA is an important and overdue protection of human rights. The experience of transgender individuals, and the discrimination they face, are unique, and should be specifically identified and unambiguously rejected in our State's civil rights laws, just like discrimination based on age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, race, disability, or ethnicity.

Sixteen states, Washington, D.C. and over 150 other localities across the country including Albany, Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, and the counties of Suffolk and Tompkins have already enacted local GENDA laws. The bill has now passed the Assembly six times.

The Assembly bill has 60 sponsors, including members of both political parties representing urban, suburban, upstate, and rural New York. State Senator Daniel Squadron sponsors the Senate bill, S. 195.

New ACA-related Special Enrollment Periods (SEPs) and Hardship Exemptions

New York State of Health is adopting new Special Enrollment Periods (SEP) and Hardship Exemptions related to the Affordable Care Act. The Obama administration announced updates to model notices informing workers of their eligibility to continue health-care coverage through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). The updates make it clear to workers that if they are eligible for COBRA continuation coverage when leaving a job, they may choose instead to purchase coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace. The Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) has posted a bulletin on "Special Enrollment Periods (SEPs) and Hardship Exemptions for persons meeting certain criteria. The bulletin provides guidance on three types of SEPs in the Federally Facilitated Marketplaces (FFM). The bulletin is available here:

<http://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Resources/Regulations-and-Guidance/Downloads/SEP-and-hardship-FAQ-5-1-2014.pdf>.

Block Watch Program

The NYPD's Blockwatchers Program trains community residents on the skills needed to be the "eyes and ears" of the Police Department. Civilian volunteers are given training in observation and then assigned a confidential Blockwatchers number, which they use to report crime and dangerous conditions in their neighborhood. Many members of this vital crime prevention program are elderly or disabled and make their observations without venturing far from their homes. Please contact your local precinct for more information.

Assembly Votes to Help and Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

Each year, roughly 450,000 incidents of domestic violence are reported in New York State, and, in 2012, state courts issued roughly 300,000 orders of protection. One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, and, in the United States, three women are murdered by their intimate partner every day.

The Assembly passed measures to provide better assistance, protection, and justice for victims.

The Assembly's legislative package includes Assembly bill A.6390 (O'Donnell), which would prohibit an individual from possessing a firearm if he or she has been convicted of certain family offenses; A.899 (Weinstein), which would permit victims to recover damages for injuries from any or all defendants found liable for failure to obey or enforce domestic violence orders of protection or temporary orders of protection; A.2562-A (Lavine), which would require hospitals to establish procedures regarding domestic violence and training programs for staff, and to designate a hospital staff member to coordinate services to victims; A.7720-B (Peoples-Stokes), which would include the unauthorized tracking of an individual, with a GPS or other device, within the meaning of "following" in the crime of stalking in the fourth degree; A.7694-B (Rozić), which would require wireless telephone companies to allow victims of domestic violence to opt out of shared or family plans without incurring any penalties; and A.9251 (Davila), which would require police to promptly translate domestic violence incident reports that are filled out in a language other than English, as well as provide the notification of victims' rights in such a victim's native language.

I voted for these bills when they passed the Assembly in April. But the Senate has not yet acted on the bills. I urge you to contact Senate Majority Coalition Leaders Dean Skelos at Skelos@nysenate.gov and Jeffrey Klein at jdklein@senate.state.ny.us, and ask that they bring these bills to the Senate floor for votes.

Victims of domestic violence can seek help or assistance 24 hours a day by calling New York's toll-free hotline at 1-800-942-6906. For further information, visit the New York State Office of Victims Services' website at ovs.ny.gov or the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence's website at opdv.ny.gov.

NYC Curbside "Organics" Collection

NYC Organics Collection is a pilot program to collect organic waste — including food and yard waste — from select NYC residences, schools, agencies, and institutions in all five boroughs. Every week, the Dept. of Sanitation collects organics from over 100,000 participants and then transports this waste to local and regional processing facilities where it is turned into compost, a natural soil amendment.

Organic waste accounts for more than 25% of all residential waste generated in NYC. Recycling organics, along with paper, metal, glass, and plastic, can help NYC save millions of dollars in landfill disposal costs and reduce pests by storing food waste in secure bins. For more information, and to see maps of the pilot areas, visit www.nyc.gov/organics.

Measles Outbreak in New York City

There is an ongoing measles outbreak in northern Manhattan, the Lower East Side, and the South Bronx. Measles is a highly contagious viral disease that causes fever and a rash, and it is spread by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing. A person can spread measles from four days before to four days after the appearance of the rash. Symptoms usually appear 10-12 days after exposure to an infected person, but symptoms may start as early as seven days before or as late as 21 days after exposure. The best way to prevent measles is with vaccination. For more information on where your child can be vaccinated, please call 311. For more information about measles or the MMR vaccine, please visit <http://www.vaccineinformation.org/measles/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/>.

Ninth Ave. International Food Festival: May 17 & 18

The Ninth Avenue Food Festival is the oldest and largest continuous food festival in New York City. This year, the event will feature dozens of different New York restaurants and cuisines, over 60 art booths, and many small, independent food and beverage purveyors. A full block will be reserved for children's games and entertainment, along with two stages for live performances and international music.

Over 200,000 people are expected to attend, drawing a mix of tourists and neighborhood residents. This is the 41st year in a row that our community has hosted this wonderful event, and I remain grateful to the Ninth Avenue Association for organizing and sponsoring it.

The Festival is on Saturday, May 17th, and Sunday, May 18th from 11:00 AM until 5:00 PM, on Ninth Avenue from 42nd to 57th Streets. For more information, contact the Ninth Avenue Association at 212-581-7217 on Tuesdays or Thursdays from 5:00PM until 8:00PM.

FastTrac® NewVenture™ for the Female Entrepreneur

Competing in a traditionally male-dominated arena, female entrepreneurs face a unique set of challenges that can have a tremendous impact on the growth of their business ventures. FastTrac® NewVenture™ for the Female Entrepreneur helps to address these and other common challenges that women business owners must overcome to be successful.

Through the guidance of accomplished entrepreneurs, business experts, and experienced coaches, FastTrac® NewVenture™ for the Female Entrepreneur is a free workshop sponsored by the SUNY Levin Institute that will help you refine your business concept, identify the components of a strong business plan, and access the appropriate resources to complete your launch. The program starts May 22 with seven full-day sessions from 9am – 4pm on the following dates: 5/22, 5/29, 6/5, 6/11, 6/18, 6/25, and 7/2.

To apply, please visit:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/summary/course_register.shtml?course=FastTrac_NewVenture_for_the_Female_Entrepreneur&date=2014_5_22_116_E_55th_Street.

Assembly Health Committee Update

The Assembly Committee on Health favorably reported 7 bills at its meeting on Monday, April 7, including legislation expanding access to the anti-overdose drug Naloxone and banning artificial trans fats in food establishments statewide. For more information on a particular bill, please contact the sponsor listed after the description.

- **Provider Participation in Child Health Plus Plans** - Prohibits insurance companies that offer Child Health Plus from requiring a participating health care provider in its Child Health Plus plan to also sign up for the insurance company's other health plans. (A4045, Pretlow)
- **Artificial Trans Fat Ban** - Protects consumers from the detrimental health effects of artificial trans fats by prohibiting certain restaurants and food establishments from serving or preparing foods with artificial trans fats. This statewide bill is modeled on New York City law. (A6053A, Ortiz)
- **Bone Marrow and Peripheral Blood Stem Cell Donor Registration** - Adds registration of bone marrow and peripheral blood stem cell prospective donors to the New York state donate life registry. (A6582A, Wright)
- **Certificate of Need Reform** - Establishes a streamlined process for hospitals and diagnostic and treatment centers to receive Certificate of Need (CON) approval without determination of public need if the project does not expand or change hospital services or if it relates to primary care services. (A6676, Gottfried)
- **Electronic Cigarette Regulation** - Adds electronic cigarettes to Clean Indoor Air Act provisions regulating smoking in certain public areas; prohibits using e-cigarettes in any place where smoking tobacco is banned by law. (A8178A, Rosenthal)
- **Naloxone Availability** - Naloxone is an "opioid antagonist" that can counteract a heroin overdose. This bill allows health care providers to issue non-patient specific prescriptions to certified programs that train individuals to use Naloxone and allows non-professionals to use Naloxone to save the life of a person with a heroin overdose. (A8637B, Dinowitz.)
- **Organ and Tissue Donor Age Expansion** - Allows people age 15 and over, but under 18, to register as organ and tissue donors, with parental consent. (A9203, Ortiz.)

