

Older Women Are Moving New York Forward



Throughout New York's history, women have taken incredible strides to create a more equal and just society. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we recognize the great work that New Yorkers like former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and Congresswoman Bella Abzug accomplished. But there is still much work to be done. Fortunately today, women elected officials are showing that age does not matter. In these difficult times, the experience and knowledge these women bring to government are clear advantages to implement and understand the needs of their constituents.

One of my first jobs was at the same agency I have the privilege of leading today, the Department for the Aging, where in 1979 I became the Bureau

Chief. After decades of working in various leadership positions in government and non-profits, the experience I gained has allowed me to grow as an effective leader.

Unfortunately, ageism still permeates to the workplace. Studies have shown that managers, in some cases without realizing it, have biases against workers of a certain age. Some claimed that these employees do not want to seek a promotion because they are at the end of their careers. But there are many woman elected officials today in New York who defy ageism and demonstrate how effective older women can be.

At the age of 63, Governor Kathy Hochul, the first woman ever to lead the state, is continuing her life's work to help New Yorkers. Just this January

she signed a bill into law expanding the definition of elder abuse to include identity theft. Then to keep older adults safe and able to live independently, the Governor extended property tax exemptions so they can continue to afford to live in their homes.

Then there is our state's Attorney General, Letitia James, who became the first person of color and first woman, to ever be elected to this office, and is now leading it in her sixties. Attorney General James has led national efforts against companies who are defrauding seniors and is working with her colleagues in government to pass legislation that would help prevent these frauds from occurring.

Speaking of our state legislature, Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein is one of the most influential lawmakers in the entire state. First elected to the State Assembly over 40 years ago to represent the 41st District in Brooklyn, she currently serves as Chairwoman of the Ways and Means Committee, giving her an outsized role in the budget process. She has also helped pass legislation to increase property tax exemptions for older adults, while bringing insurance companies and

long-term care providers together to make sure those who need it can receive the care they need.

We also have older women leading at the local level. In January, the City Council voted for Adrienne E. Adams to be its Speaker. A proud grandmother, the 61-year-old has represented Council District 28 in Southeast Queens for the last five years. As Speaker, Ms. Adams has considerable say in the city's budget and the body's legislative calendar.

New York has always relied on women and older adults to move our city forward, and that tradition continues today. Whether it is in the workforce or right in their own communities, these women demonstrate that older New Yorkers know how to get things done.



By Commissioner
Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez