

State Senator Daniel Squadron's

Community Update

2014



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DANIEL SQUADRON
SENATOR, 26TH DISTRICT

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

RANKING MEMBER
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& COMMISSIONS
FINANCE
INVESTIGATIONS AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
JUDICIARY
SOCIAL SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION

Dear Participant,

Every spring, I host a Community Convention so that you, and the other residents of our Senate District can help me shape priorities for the coming year. We also continue the conversation every Fall at smaller forums where I report on our progress.

As in past years, on the following pages, you'll find updates from me on many of the issues and ideas that were brought up at our Spring Community Convention.

I love working to make government work better for you – and I love engaging you in the process of making government work better for our city and state.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve, and thank you for taking the time to join these conversations. See you in the neighborhood!

Thank you,

Daniel Squadron
New York State Senator
26th District

Zoning, Section 8, Public Housing, Affordable Housing, and Tenant's Rights

The housing discussion groups were moderated by Mark Handelman, Gregory Brender, and Rob Perris and dealt with public housing safety and protecting tenants from harassment.

“We need stricter penalties for aggressively pushing tenants out of affordable housing.”

-Section 8 and Public Housing Participant

Issues Raised:

- Protect tenants from landlord harassment to push them out.
- Improve safety and access in NYCHA developments.
- Oppose Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Plan to “downsize” apartments.

Related Work:

Senator Squadron has fought to protect tenants from harassment by landlords.

- Worked closely with tenants, tenant advocates, and colleagues to successfully lay the foundation for state investigations into two landlords with a history of egregious tenant complaints.
- Worked to improve construction safety and obtained a construction mitigation plan for buildings operated by SMA Equities, along with Councilmember Chin, colleagues, tenants, and tenant advocates.
- Worked in Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan to resolve tenant concerns as they arose, with landlords and agencies.

Senator Squadron continues to fight to improve quality of life for NYCHA residents.

- Got NYCHA to agree to fully repair the faulty pipes that have forced Smith Houses residents to go without cooking gas for weeks or months at a time, along with colleagues.
- Formed a task force with colleagues, tenants, and agencies to oversee and streamline gas pipe repairs at Smith Houses.
- Wrote bill to permanently end NYCHA’s payments to the NYPD for basic police protection.

Senator Squadron is working with HPD and colleagues to help minimize the impact of HPD funding cuts.

- Joined Borough President Brewer to ask HPD for a moratorium on downsizing until a better solution for Section 8 funding cuts is found.
- Met with HPD & tenants to answer questions and concerns tenants had on downsizing policy.

Senator Squadron is fighting to protect rent regulated housing and increase affordability through legislation:

- Tenants would have the right to recover damages from the landlord if a tenant is forced to vacate their property due to neglect. (S162)
- Landlords would be prevented from discriminating against tenants based on source of income. (S187)
- Landlords would be restricted from taking possession of units for personal use. (S197)
- The City Department of Social Service would be permitted to participate in housing court proceedings. (S796)
- Landlords would be required to provide a written receipt when rent is paid. (S7766)



Speaking at Alliance for Tenant Power Rally in November 2014.

Arts and Culture

The Arts and Culture discussion group was moderated by Yume Kitasei and talked about the ramifications of gentrification and increasing access to arts and culture programs for the underserved.

Issues Raised:

- Increase accessibility to arts for seniors and students.
- Support libraries throughout the district.
- Save the historical elements of the South Street Seaport.

Related Work:

- Annually release a Parent Resource Guide and a Senior Resource Guide. The guides provide information on arts and culture programs throughout the district.
- Voted to restore a \$4 million cut in library aid in the state budget.
- Participated in and advocated for a strong role for the Seaport Working Group, which recommended “maintaining the historic character and sense of place of the seaport by recognizing and supporting a reinvented South Street Seaport Museum as the cultural anchor of the district.”



Handing out Senior Guides at
Grand Street Settlement on the
Lower East Side.

Civil Rights, Economic, and Social Justice

The Civil Rights, Economic, and Social Justice discussion group was moderated by Michael Czaczkes and focused on how government can better fight for fairness and equality.

Issues Raised:

- Fight for LGBTQ rights.
- Increase cultural competency of state agencies.
- Support animal rights.

Related Work:

- Sponsors the Gender Employment Non Discrimination Act, which would prevent discrimination based on gender identity and expression. (S195)
- Introduced Fairness and Equity Act, which would make smoking marijuana a ticketable rather than an arrestable offense, create a process for vacating the records of those previously affected by these unjust laws, and require racial impact statements to fully understand the disparate effects that proposed legislation could have on minority communities. (S7927)
- Cosponsored the No Condoms as Evidence Act, which prohibits police officers from using possession of a condom as evidence in a prostitution trial (S1379) and a ban on the practice of gay conversion therapy in New York (S4917).
- Supported several bills to increase animal rights, including:
 - S6589: Imposes a moratorium on the eradication of mute swans.
 - S7890 (Signed into law): Bans the sale of ivory in New York State.
 - S7533: Allows pets to be permitted to board public transportation in the case of an evacuation.
 - S7684 (Signed into law): Increases penalties for stealing pets.



Senator Squadron announcing the Fairness & Equity Act, alongside colleagues and advocates.

Education

The Education discussion group was moderated by Gigi Li and participants talked about school overcrowding issues throughout the district.

Issues Raised:

- Fight to fix school overcrowding across district.
- Expand work-based experience opportunities for middle school and high school students.
- Expand child care options for working parents after school.
- Expand access to day care for working mothers.

Related Work:

- Wrote bill, developed with Lower Manhattan parents, that requires NYC to use better data – like births and building permits – so planning for schools reflects the changing needs of communities, along with Speaker Silver and signed into law by Governor Cuomo.
- Worked with P.S. 8 PTA and local colleagues in urging a solution to the growing P.S. 8 overcrowding problem.
- Fought for an additional \$10 million in funding in this year’s state budget for the Summer Youth Employment Program to increase the number of opportunities available.
- Supported the allocation of \$300 million for Universal Pre-K programs in the state budget.
- Helped Chinatown YMCA coordinate with government agencies so that their permits were issued in a timely manner.



Handing out Service and Government Engagement Awards at P.S. 8.

Emergency Preparedness

The Emergency Preparedness group was moderated by David Crane and focused on increasing funding for disaster preparedness and working together to prevent future disasters.

Issues Raised:

- Increase storm resiliency efforts.
- Increase funding for disaster preparedness.
- Better planning before and during disasters.

Related Work:

- Supporter of The Big U, a project to increase resiliency and provide recreational access to the Manhattan shoreline and will push forward the expansion of Pier 42.
- Urged expansion of East River Ferry service as a resilient form of transportation in letter to EDC.
- Advocated for increased support for the Harbor School's Billion Oyster Program.
- Working with NYCHA to increase resiliency in developments.



Speaking at Emergency
Preparedness Forum at PS 276.

Health Care

The Health Care group was moderated by Catherine Zinnel and focused on how to ensure affordable access to care, especially in Brooklyn.

“Any patient should know laboratory costs, physician consult service costs, etc., and be able to shop for a cheaper alternative.”

-Health Care Group Participant

Issues Raised:

- Keep LICH open.
- Create single payer healthcare system in New York.
- Rearrange hospital structures to make sure there is a policy to prevent closures.
- Increase out of network provisions.

Related Work:

- Working on solutions for communities to have a greater say in any hospital closures.
- Voted to hold consumers not liable in the case of emergency or surprise out of network health care cost.
- Successfully fought to restore budget cuts to Nurse-Family Partnership, which pairs first-time eligible mothers with trained nurses from the second trimester of pregnancy to the child’s second birthday, and called for making the program universal across NYS.
- Cosponsored bill to create single payer health care system in New York (S2078).



Thanking nurses from the New York State Nurses Association for their hard work in saving lives.

Open Government: Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform

The Open Government group was moderated by Josh Levin and focused on issues of campaign finance reform, poll site issues, and accountability of government agencies.

Issues Raised:

- Implement a public financing system in New York State.
- Make government work more effectively for the average citizen by limiting influence of corporations in politics.

Related Work:

- Sponsored bill to close the LLC loophole, which allows corporations to contribute unlimited sums of money to statewide candidates. (S166A)
- Sponsored bill to lower contribution limits across the board. (S174)
- Sponsored bill to make voting in primary elections easier. (S213)
- Pushed Senate Republicans to make a more robust campaign finance plan during budget debates.
- Organized a sign-on letter to Congress calling for an overturn of the Citizens United decision.



Senator Squadron standing with Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and colleagues announcing the Senate Democratic Conference Ethics Reform Plan.

Parks and Open Spaces

The Parks and Open Spaces group was moderated by Jessica Mates and focused on how to ensure adequate funding for parks across the district.

Issues Raised:

- Support more government resources for smaller parks.
- Oppose housing in Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Related Work:

- Supported Mayor DeBlasio's Community Parks Initiative, which will spend \$130 million on capital improvements in 35 neighborhood parks, and came out of Senator Squadron's Parks Equity Proposal.
 - In our district, these funds will be allocated to Henry Jackson Playground, Luther Gulick Playground, and Sol Lain Playground.
- Sponsored bill to create a Neighborhood Parks Alliance to connect well-funded conservancies with neighborhood parks and testified before the City Council Parks Committee several times on its importance. (S5689)
- Helped establish a friends of group for Corlears Hook Park on the Lower East Side.
- Worked with the Parks Department to expedite replacement of benches in McCarren Park.
- Continued to lead the opposition to housing at the Pier 6 site in Brooklyn Bridge Park.



Announcing the Community Parks Initiative with Mayor de Blasio, Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Assemblymember Kavanagh, and colleagues.

Streets and Transportation

The Streets and Transportation group was moderated by Karen Nieves and focused on underserved areas of public transportation and how to increase pedestrian safety.

Issues Raised:

- Lack of bus routes throughout the district.
- Fix the East Broadway station.
- Improve traffic enforcement and congestion.



Rallying to make permanent the J/G/M free transfer with Assemblymember Lentol and Councilmember Levin.

Related Work:

- Sponsored an update to Hayleys and Diego's Law, which Senator Squadron authored with Assemblymember Kavanagh in 2010, to allow police officers to enforce the law against a driver who strikes a pedestrian, regardless of whether or not the officer witnessed the accident. This bill passed the Senate in 2013 and 2014.
- Convened a working group to recommend improvements to traffic conditions in Greenpoint, with Congressman Maloney, Borough President Adams, Senator Dilan, Assemblymember Lentol, Councilmember Levin, DOT, Brooklyn Community Board 1, Neighbors Allied for Good Growth, EWVIDCO, and Transportation Alternatives.
- Voted to renew the red light camera program in New York City and to allow New York City to reduce speed limit to 25 MPH, both of which were signed into law by the Governor.
- Hosted a town hall regarding bus transportation in the West Village and SoHo, along with Borough President Brewer, Senator Hoylman, Assemblymember Glick, and Councilmembers Johnson and Chin.
 - Working with Manhattan Community Board 2 and MTA to follow up on the M5, M21 and other lines.
- Helped find transit solutions for the G Train shutdown in Brooklyn this past summer through a town hall and other work.
- Rallied for permanent free transfer between Broadway on G Train and Lorimer Street on the J and M Lines
- Called for expanded East River Ferry service.
- Worked with MTA to fix escalator at East Broadway Station, along with Speaker Silver, Congressman Maloney, and Councilmember Chin.
- Worked with colleagues and DOT on the Brooklyn Bridge Reconstruction working group to ensure better coordination.



Speaking at rally announcing repair of East Broadway station escalator, along with Speaker Silver and Congressman Maloney.

Small Business, Economic Development and Innovation

The Small Business, Economic Development and Innovation group was moderated by Catherine McVay Hughes and focused on how to grow and maintain small businesses.

Issues Raised:

- Create legislation to allow for socially responsible businesses.
- Provide low interest loans to small business start ups.

Related Work:

- Authored 2011 law that brought benefit corporations to New York State. Benefit corporations allow businesses to provide a double bottom line of profitability and social responsibility.
- Sponsored bill to require the small business revolving loan fund to give a percentage of its funds to loans under \$5,000. (S4878)
- Hosted rountable discussion, along with Congressman Velazquez and other federal, state, and city officials aimed at finding ways to ensure New York City small businesses impacted by Hurricane Sandy receive the assistance they need to fully recover.



Senator Squadron supporting small businesses
at the South Street Seaport, along with
Councilmember Chin.

Senior Citizens and Accessibility Concerns

The Senior Citizens and Accessibility Concerns group was moderated by Ronnie Raymond and focused on a lack of accessible transportation and how to protect seniors in our district.

Issues Raised:

- Lack of accessible transit.
- Protect seniors from financial abuse.
- Expand Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption Programs (DRIE), which offer seniors or the disabled living in rent regulated housing a freeze from future rent increases.

Related Work:

- Proposed a reduced fair for seniors or people with disabilities for the East River Ferry, similar to current reduced fares for seniors on express buses.
- Voted for legislation signed into law by the Governor that increased maximum income for SCRIE eligibility from \$29,000 to \$50,000.
 - Cosponsored legislation written by Assemblymember Kavanagh, signed into law by the governor, that increased maximum income for DRIE eligibility from \$29,000 to \$50,000.
- Fought for an additional \$5 million in state budget for the Community Services for the Elderly Program.



Speaking to seniors at Grand Street Settlement.