

Liz Krueger



New York State Senate | 28th District

March 2013

Message from Liz...

I was pleased that Governor Cuomo identified public financing of elections as one of his priorities in his State of the State address. I have long supported legislation to create a public financing system for elections at the state level, similar to what we've had in New York City for the last fifteen years. Campaign finance reform is often presented as an esoteric issue divorced from more pressing public concerns, but in fact, the way we pay for our elections has everything to do with the kinds of policies our state pursues on other issues.

A case in point is New York City housing law. The ability of some New York City landlords and the organizations that represent them to funnel money into political campaigns everywhere in the state is a key reason upstate legislators with barely any multiple dwellings in their districts are so fixated on weakening tenant protections and undermining rent regulation in New York City.

In 2012 alone, the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) and Rent Stabilization Association (RSA) donated over \$1,000,000 to state candidates and parties. This represents only a portion of the amount that real estate interests put into political campaigns, as some individual landlords are also significant contributors, spending far above the individual limits by funneling their contributions through dozens of separate LLCs. Thanks to a loophole in the law, each LLC can make its own donations above and beyond its owner's maximum allowable donations. Individual landlords have used this loophole to funnel tens or even hundreds of thousands in donations to individual candidates. To think that all this money does not change outcomes in Albany is politically naïve.

Housing policy is only the beginning. The influence of the banking industry undermines the ability of the state to enact consumer banking reforms and protect mortgage holders. The influence of the oil and gas industry impacts the willingness of legislators to move legislation banning or tightly regulating hydrofracking. And of course, the influence of large corporations and selected conservative donors makes it difficult to build support for progressive taxation.

Massive five-figure checks from lobbyists, corporate insiders, and the ultra-wealthy speak louder than voters. They have become the life's blood of politics in our state, when we need

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Albany focused on the whole economy and all New Yorkers, not just the narrow interests of a few big spenders. Comprehensive campaign finance reform – with lower donation limits and matching funds to reduce the reliance on big checks – is the only way to root out the corruption fueled by the free flow of money in politics.

Below you will find information on an upcoming forum I am hosting on campaign finance reform. Governor Cuomo's vocal support for public financing means that right now we have the best opportunity for action that we have ever had. I hope you will join me at the forum as we discuss the details of small-donor matching fund systems and work to build public support for action to make our elections more about voters and less about who gives the dollars.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

*State Senator Liz Krueger
Presents*

Legislation for the Common Good: Where Did it Go?
Why You Should Care About Campaign Finance Reform!

Thursday, April 11, 2013

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Lighthouse International

111 East 59th Street

(Between Lexington and Park Avenues)

For more information, please call (212) 490-9535.

Senator Liz Krueger's Roundtable for Boomers & Seniors:

In the past century, U.S. life expectancy at birth has climbed from 47 to 77 years. America's 78 million baby boomers began turning 65 last year at a rate of one every 10 seconds.

This year's five-part Roundtable Breakfast Series has been devoted to discussions around "The Challenges of Longevity." Our fifth and last session, "Making Connections as We Age," will take place on Thursday, March 21, from 8:30 am – 10:30 am at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street.

To RSVP or request additional information, contact Rebekah Glusheski, rglusheski.nyc@gmail.com, or call our office at 212-490-9535. Complimentary bagels and coffee will be served.

Incorrect Information on Tax Abatements Sent to Some Co-Op / Condo Owners:

Tens of thousands of New York City residents eligible for a city condo and co-op tax break have received letters from the City that might incorrectly state that they no longer qualify for a property tax abatement. Albany passed a change in the law in January and the city's Department of Finance recently began sending letters to some owners stating: "Our records show that this unit is not your primary residence, so your abatement will be phased out."

The new legislation only allows owners to claim the tax break on their primary residence, and no longer allows the break on secondary homes or for non-resident owners. The problem was that some number of people received the letter at their primary residence – which is indeed still eligible for the full break.

Our office will be working the Department of Finance to get clarification and information about how owner-occupants can provide the necessary documentation to confirm their continued eligibility for this abatement.

Victory for New Middle School on Upper East Side:

This month we've won a huge victory for the children of the Upper East Side – the NYC Department of Education has agreed to open a new middle school in September 2014, at P.S. 158's annex on York Avenue.

This victory belongs first and foremost to the parents and community members who were tireless in their advocacy, clearly making the case that the East Side needed more middle school seats and working together to present a united front that the Department of Education could not – and ultimately did not – ignore.

I'm thrilled to have helped with this successful campaign, and am already looking forward to 2014, when we can open the doors on this new school together, giving more of the East Side's students the chance to go to school in their own community.

Apply to Serve on a Citywide or Community Education Council:

The application period for the 2013 Education Council Selection Process, which began February 13, has been extended! The new deadline is now March 27, 2013. Parents interested in applying to serve on a Citywide or Community Education Council can apply online or submit a paper application. We encourage you to inform as many parents as you can about this exciting opportunity to take part in supporting the schools in your community.

Parents can apply online at www.NYCParentLeaders.org now until 11:59 p.m. on March 27.

Paper applications are also available to download at the Division of Family and Community Engagement's website and at www.NYCParentLeaders.org through March 27, as well as at the Division of Family and Community Engagement's physical office, located at:

49 Chambers St., Room 503
New York, NY 10007

Paper applications must be postmarked by 11:59 p.m. on March 27.

Questions? There is a Frequently Asked Questions section online that will answer many of your questions or you can also call the Division of Family and Community Engagement at 212-374-4118.

Public Forum on Parkland on the Upper East Side:

Community Board 8 and New Yorkers for Parks are sponsoring a Public Forum on the Pressing Need for Parkland on Manhattan's Upper East Side. The forum will take place on Thursday, April 25th at 6:30 p.m. at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, Bonnie J. Sacerdote Lecture Hall, located at the Ground Level of the Uris Center, entrance at Fifth Ave. and E. 81st St. For more information, contact Community Board 8 at 212-758-4340.

Quitting Smoking – National Kick Butts Day:

Wednesday, March 20, 2013 is Kick Butts Day – a national day of activism that empowers youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against Big Tobacco.

The tobacco industry spends \$1.2 million every day across New York City and State

marketing their deadly product. The more tobacco marketing kids see, the more likely they are to smoke. In fact, 90 percent of smokers begin smoking before age 18. In Manhattan alone, 4,000 public high school students smoke cigarettes; one-third will die prematurely as a direct result of smoking if they continue.

The Manhattan Smoke-Free Partnership's Kick Butts Day youth event will take place on Wednesday, March 20, 2013 at 4:30pm, Harlem State Building Plaza, 163 West 125th Street. For more details, go to www.smokefreeny.org.

Need Help Quitting? From March 5-21, 2013, smokers who call the NYS Smoker's Quitline will get extra resources, along with nicotine replacement therapy, to help them quit. Call 1-866-697-8487 or 311, or enroll online at www.nycquits.org.

Free Tax Preparation Assistance:

I encourage you to take advantage of these services, which can save you money and ensure you avoid getting caught in "Refund Anticipation Loan" scams that many for-profit tax preparers engage in. Here are some sites in the 28th Senate District where you can get free assistance with your taxes:

Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL), 188 Madison Ave @ 42nd, Street
Telephone: [646-315-7703](tel:646-315-7703)

Site Hours: Monday, Tuesday 11am-3pm; Wednesday, Thursday, 4-6pm; Friday, Saturday 3-5pm.

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by Food Bank for NYC

58th Street Library, 127 East 58th Street

Telephone: [212-759-7358](tel:212-759-7358)

Site Hours: Tuesday and Saturday, 10:30am-2:30pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

67th Street Library, 328 East 67th Street

Telephone: [212-734-1717](tel:212-734-1717)

Site Hours: Friday, 10:30am-2:30pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Webster Branch Library, 1465 York Avenue

Telephone: [212-288-5049](tel:212-288-5049)

Site Hours: Monday, 10:30am-2:30pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street

Telephone: [212-744-5022](tel:212-744-5022) ext. 1399

Site Hours: Wednesday, 10:00am-2:00pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center, 415 East 93rd Street

Telephone: [212-360-7620](tel:212-360-7620)

Site Hours: Friday, 10:30am-3:00pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Stein Senior Center, 204415 East 23rd Street

Telephone: [646-395-8083](tel:646-395-8083)

Site Hours: Thursday, 9:30am-2:30pm

Income Limits: No income restrictions. Sponsored by AARP

Baruch College – Newman Library, 151 East 25th Street

Telephone: [646-312-4600](tel:646-312-4600)

Site Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 12pm-7pm; Friday, 12pm-6pm; Saturday, 12:30am-5:30pm

Income Limits: Income of 49,000 or less. Sponsored by VITA.

VOLS Legal Clinics for Low-Income Residents Over Age 60:

The Volunteers of Legal Services (VOLS) Elderly Project provides pro-bono legal services to low-income people over age 60 who live in Manhattan. VOLS conducts legal clinics each month at senior centers where seniors can discuss their legal concerns in confidence, receive legal advice and, where appropriate, obtain referrals to a volunteer lawyer for representation. Areas of legal assistance include wills, medical directives, powers of attorney, housing, consumer matters and Medicaid. Over 150 lawyers serve on their Elderly Project volunteer attorney roster.

Upcoming Clinic dates and locations are below:

- Burden Center for the Aging, 1484 First Avenue (between 77th & 78th Streets) — 2 pm — second Friday of each month (March 8th, April 12th). Call [212-879-7400](tel:212-879-7400) for information.
- Stanley Isaacs Senior Center, 415 East 93rd Street (east of 1st Avenue) — 10 am — third Friday of each month (March 15th, April 19th). Call [212-360-7620](tel:212-360-7620) for information.
- Stein Senior Center, 204 East 23rd Street (between 2nd and 3rd Ave.) – 10 AM, March 21st only.
- Encore Community Services Senior Center, St. Malachy's Church - 239 West 49th Street (between Broadway and 8th Ave.) — 10 am — (March 25th, April 22nd). Call Sister Margaret Rose at [212-581-2910, ext 118](tel:212-581-2910) for information.

Metrocard Bus and Van Schedule:

The MTA offers Metrocard-related services throughout New York City through mobile buses and vans. Buses provide a full range of services, including applying for or refilling a Reduced-Fare MetroCard, buying or refilling a regular MetroCard, or getting answers to a MetroCard-related question. Vans sell Unlimited Ride MetroCard and Pay-Per-Ride MetroCard, and refill MetroCards and Reduced-Fare MetroCards. Buses and vans will be in my district on the following dates and locations:

- March 14, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 69 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- March 20, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 St & 3 Ave – Bus
- March 20, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 St & York Ave – Bus
- March 20, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 St & York Ave – Bus
- March 21, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 St & 2 Ave – Van
- March 21, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 St & 2 Ave – Van
- March 25, 9 - 10:30 am, 92 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- March 26, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- March 26, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 69 St & Lexington Ave – Bus
- April 3, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 St & York Ave – Bus

- April 3, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 St & York Ave – Bus
- April 4, 7 - 9:30 am, 90 St & York Ave – Van
- April 4, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 St & 2 Ave – Van
- April 4, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 St & 2 Ave – Van
- April 5, 9 - 10 am, 57 St and 1 Ave – Van
- April 5, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 St and 3 Ave – Van
- April 5, 12:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 St and 1 Ave – Van

The full mobile Metrocard schedule is available at <http://mta.info/metrocard/mms.htm>.

Heat Season Rules:

The City Housing Maintenance Code and State Multiple Dwelling Law require building owners to provide heat and hot water to all tenants. Building owners are required to provide hot water 365 days a year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Between October 1st and May 31st, a period designated as “Heat Season”, building owners are also required to provide tenants with heat under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6AM and 10PM, if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between the hours of 10PM and 6AM, if the temperature outside falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Tenants who are cold in their apartments should first attempt to notify the building owner, managing agent or superintendent. If heat is not restored, the tenant should call the City’s Citizen Service Center at 311. For the hearing-impaired, the TTY number is [\(212\) 504-4115](tel:2125044115). The Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

Styrofoam

I was extremely pleased that in his State of the City address, Mayor Bloomberg called for a number of measures to address New York City's waste stream, including a ban on extruded polystyrene, commonly known as styrofoam. For several years I have carried legislation (S. 3444) that would ban styrofoam statewide.

The purpose of this bill is to help New York clean up our waste stream and become a more environmentally sustainable state. We are creating far more damaging waste than we should, and our failure to address waste stream reduction is one reason why we find ourselves fighting over marine transfer stations and other extreme methods for dealing with all the non-recyclable trash our city produces. If we have the ability to create affordable alternatives, we should make that leap.

S. 3444 would allow the food service industry one year to find environmentally-friendly alternatives to the styrofoam products currently in use. It applies to restaurants, as well as food-service providers and vendors such as supermarkets.

Polystyrene is a liquid hydrocarbon that is commercially manufactured from petroleum, a quickly disappearing commodity. And while we're quick to throw styrofoam containers in the trash, that hardly gets rid of them: a single styrofoam cup can take up to 500 years to fully disintegrate. Each year Americans throw away 25 billion styrofoam cups, and 1,369 tons of styrofoam products every day..

Styrofoam is a notorious pollutant that is very difficult to recycle due to its light weight and low scrap value. It is generally not accepted in curbside programs, is seldom able to be reused, takes up a considerable amount of space in landfills, and takes a very long time to fully decompose. Due to the physical properties of polystyrene, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states "that such material can have serious impacts on human health, wildlife, and the aquatic environment" because the product breaks down and can clog waterways, or be mistaken for food by wildlife.

But that's not the only threat styrofoam poses! One of styrofoam's components, styrene, is a known hazardous substance suspected to be a carcinogen and neurotoxin, which release toxins when heated. Many people do not realize that toxins can be released into their food when they microwave it in a styrofoam container.

My bill includes an "affordability clause", which recognizes that not every styrofoam product currently has an environmentally-friendly alternative, and even in some cases where there is such an alternative, the much higher cost would place undue economic hardship on various businesses. Under my bill the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will annually adopt a list of suitable, affordable alternative products that are compostable or recyclable; these alternatives must be within 15% of the cost of non-compostable or non-recyclable products currently in use. Similar bills have already been enacted in the cities of Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley, Portland, and about 100 other municipalities across the country. If we act now, New York could be the first state to enact this legislation and get ahead of the curve on this pressing environmental reform.

Many municipalities have enacted various versions of this law, and some of the nation's largest food-service providers have begun moving in this direction. If we want our city and state to be livable in the future, it is critical we forge ahead with practical steps to reduce the amount of non-biodegradable waste we produce. I am hopeful that Mayor Bloomberg's initiative will help advance this discussion on the state level as well.