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New York State Senate | 28th District



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Message from Liz...

One of the most contentious issues in Albany over the last few months has been the implementation of the Common Core Curriculum in all New York State public schools.

Common Core is a label and a buzzword that's been tossed around a lot without much conversation of what it means, so it's important that we start with that. **The Common Core attempts to establish a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics.** The goal of these standards is to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter college or the workforce. There's nothing wrong with this goal – in fact, it's critically important – but I have serious concerns that the rushed and disorderly way the state has gone about implementing the Common Core is undermining its potential for success.

I have heard repeatedly from college administrators and faculty that many entering students are woefully unprepared for college-level work. At a recent budget hearing, SUNY officials reported that a third of New York's high school graduates entering four-year colleges, and half of community college students, need remedial help. A 2012 study by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform found that in the South Bronx, only ten percent of students met college readiness standards after four years of high school.

While I am fortunate to have excellent schools in my district, it is clear that many other communities throughout the city and the state are not so well served. It is critical that the state establish standards that ensure all our children receive an education that will give them the opportunity to succeed in the future, and no one looking at our school system can say it is currently meeting that responsibility. As the Annenberg study put it we must "invest heavily in school improvement strategies to increase the capacities of all schools."

There are a number of potential strategies for addressing this problem, including smaller class sizes, teacher training and professional development, and access to pre-Kindergarten

What's Inside

Message from Liz	1
Community Update	3
- Roundtable for Boomers and Seniors	
- Nominate Remarkable Women and Veterans from Our Community	
- Update on Efforts to Fight the Proposed Marine Transfer Station	
- New Middle Schools Application Due March 12	
- Church of the Incarnation Senior Resource Day	
- Request a Public Litter Basket on Your Street	
- Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Monthly Workshops	
- Free Tax Preparation Assistance	
- Filing Complaints Against Tax Preparers	
- VOLS Legal Clinics for Low-Income Residents Over Age 60	
- Metrocard Bus and Van Schedule	
- Heat Season Rules	
Spotlight on Policy	8
- Restoring Food Stamp Benefits	
- Protecting Employees' Right to Access Reproductive Health Services	

and afterschool programs. Many of these strategies require additional investment by the state, and the failure of the state to provide the billions of dollars of additional funding required by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision undermines our schools' ability to provide a sound basic education. But I also believe that the Common Core curriculum could be an important piece of the picture, by providing a standard for the knowledge that all students should gain through primary and secondary education.

Unfortunately, in implementing the Common Core, the state has put the cart before the horse. They have piled Common Core tests on top of other testing, exacerbating an already serious problem where evaluation takes precedence over learning. Even more problematic, testing on the Common Core curriculum was done at the same time as implementation of the new curriculum, and in many cases, teachers were not trained in the new standards. This meant students were being tested on material they had not yet learned, and not surprisingly, test scores plummeted.

If we are going to implement the Common Core, it needs to be done in a more orderly manner, to ensure that teachers are prepared and students are being tested on material they have actually had a fair chance to learn. In other words, the curriculum should phase in first, then the testing later. There are a number of proposals, including legislation carried by Assembly Education Chair Cathy Nolan that passed in the Assembly earlier this month (A. 8929), that would delay the assessment piece of implementation for students in lower grades and for teachers until the kinks have been worked out in the curriculum. Assemblymember Nolan's legislation would also require schools to provide teacher training in the new curriculum to ensure they are adequately prepared to give students the best chance of success. Finally, the Nolan bill would also delay implementation of a system intended to facilitate the sharing of data on students until at least July 2015, and would give parents the ability to opt out of the data-sharing system.

(Side note: the data-sharing system, to be run by a company called inBloom, is something I've had deep concerns about for some time – it's supposed to enable educators and administrators to see patterns and develop better teaching strategies, but the way it's been put together there are major privacy concerns and a real possibility that the data would actually be used to help with development and marketing of for-profit products by third parties. I think hitting the pause button on this project is the right idea, and I think the Senate should both agree to this and also follow up by supporting a comprehensive approach to protecting student privacy, requiring robust security measures of all vendors, penalties for violations, and limiting the inter-agency collection of personal student data.)

The ultimate goal of these or any other changes to our educational policy should be improving instruction and delivering better outcomes for our kids. By rushing in the assessment piece of Common Core, I think the State Department of Education created a sense that this was a punitive measure. The goal is not to punish teachers, or to hold back students, but to help teachers to help students achieve their full potential. We need to take the time to get implementation right if we want to achieve that goal. We also need to remember that it's not just about testing, standards, and accountability – we must provide adequate funding for all our schools, no matter where they are in the state.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Senator Liz Krueger's Roundtable for Boomers & Seniors:

Senator Liz Krueger's Roundtable for Boomers & Seniors provides an opportunity for constituents to come together to explore life issues that are relevant across the age span. At each session, attendees hear from and engage with professionals who are knowledgeable on topics that are of concern to the growing population of older adults in New York City. Over five sessions in five months, the roundtable looks at a specific issue from five unique perspectives. Past programs have addressed issues surrounding financial issues for older adults, caregiving, and employment. Last year, we examined longevity and its impact on society. This year's topic, How We Age, will look at issues around how we age physically, mentally, emotionally, creatively, and socially.

The next roundtable will take place on Thursday, March 20th from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street. It will focus on agism. Call [212-490-9535](tel:212-490-9535) or email anrielle.georgenyc@gmail.com to RSVP.

Nominate Remarkable Women and Veterans from Our Community:

Each year, the New York State Senate honors remarkable veterans and women from around our state with its Veterans' Hall of Fame and Women of Distinction ceremonies. One veteran and one woman of distinction from each district can be selected for recognition in a ceremony and an exhibit in our state's capitol building. Last year's honorees from our district were Wilbur A. Weder and Dr. Elaine M. Walsh.

Do you know a veteran and/or a woman who has made a difference in our community, or who has a remarkable, inspiring story? Nominate them for this year's Veterans' Hall of Fame and Women of Distinction awards! Email your nominations to liz@lizkrueger.com, with "Veterans' Hall of Fame Nomination" or "Women of Distinction Nomination" in the subject line. Please submit your nominations by March 15th!

For more information on these awards and lists of past recipients, see the State Senate's Veterans' Hall of Fame and Women of Distinction web pages at:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/honoring-our-veterans>
<http://www.nysenate.gov/initiative/women-distinction-0>.

Update on Efforts to Fight the Proposed Marine Transfer Station:

Last month I submitted testimony to the New York City Council Environmental Protection Committee at a hearing on air quality. My testimony highlighted the damage that the operation of a Marine Transfer Station (MTS) at East 91st Street would do to surrounding communities. The neighborhoods surrounding the proposed MTS site already have some of the poorest air quality in New York City, and are home to thousands of New Yorkers,

including the residents of Stanley Isaacs Houses, one of the largest NYCHA developments in Manhattan. In addition, the MTS staging ramp would bisect the Asphalt Green playgrounds, currently used by thousands of children from all over New York City. In my testimony, I urged the council to devote resources to expanded recycling programs and clean garbage truck technology, which would serve to improve overall city air quality.

New Middle Schools Application Due March 12:

Your child can now apply to new middle schools opening in Community School District 2, including one on the Upper East Side. These new middle schools will be pre-populated on the New Middle Schools Application, which will be distributed by your child's elementary school this week. Your child will also receive directory pages providing information about each new school at this time. The two new District 2 schools are Yorkville East Middle School (York Avenue & East 77th Street) and City Knoll Middle School (Tenth Avenue and West 44th Street). For more information, visit

<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/Resources/default.htm>.

Church of the Incarnation Senior Resource Day:

Seniors and their friends and family are invited to join us for an afternoon of conversation and community on Sunday, March 30 from 1-3pm. Incarnation volunteers will offer free technology help, so bring your questions about the internet, email, cameras, smart phones, iPads, and so on. A representative of Citymeals on Wheels will offer a short talk and Q & A on Healthy Eating for Seniors. Bethany Medical Clinic will offer blood pressure screenings and refreshments will be served. There is no cost for the event, but please RSVP before March 27 to (347) 886-6532 or info@churchoftheincarnation.org. The Church of the Incarnation is located at 35th St. and Madison Ave.

Request a Public Litter Basket on Your Street:

The Department of Sanitation of New York has an online application for requesting public litter baskets. It is accessible at:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dsny/html/contact/requests_litter.shtml

Requests can also be made through 311.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Monthly Workshops:

The Legal Advocacy and Organizing Project at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is sponsoring monthly workshops on a variety of issues. The April workshops will deal with Medicaid Eligibility and Long Term Care. Dates for the workshops are as follows:

- Thursday, April 3, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the Center at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 343 East 70th Street.
- Monday, April 7, 11 a.m. to Noon at the Senior Center at St Peter's Church, 619 Lexington Avenue at 54th Street.

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. AARP is sponsoring a number of locations on the East Side, and there are no age or income restrictions to receive this assistance. Here are some sites in the 28th Senate District where you can get free assistance with your taxes:

58th Street Library, 127 East 58th Street

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

Site Hours: Wednesday 11:00am to 3:00pm and Saturday, 10:30am-2:30pm

67th Street Library, 328 East 67th Street

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

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

96th Street Library, 328 East 67th Street

Telephone: [212-289-0908](tel:212-289-0908)

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

Community Church of New York, 40 East 35th Street

Telephone: [212-683-4988](tel:212-683-4988)

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

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street

Telephone: [212-744-5022](tel:212-744-5022)

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

Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL), 188 Madison Ave @ 42nd Street

Telephone: [646-315-7703](tel:646-315-7703)

Site Hours: Wednesday, 9:30am-2:30pm.

Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center, 415 East 93rd Street

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

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

Stein Senior Center, 204415 East 23rd Street

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

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

Webster Branch Library, 1465 York Avenue

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

Site Hours: Monday, 11:30am-3:00pm

Filing Complaints Against Tax Preparers:

New York State is one of only four states that regulates tax preparers. The State Department of Taxation and Finance Office of Professional Responsibility oversees tax preparers, and will investigate complaints about misleading advertising, fees, or fraudulent practices. To file a complaint, call 518-530-HELP or visit <http://www.tax.ny.gov/tp/reg/opr.htm>.

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 14th, April 11th). Call Velda Murad at [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 21st, April 18th). Call Amy Loewenberg at [212-360-7620](tel:212-360-7620) ext, 112 for information.

Encore Community Services Senior Center, St. Malachy's Church - 239 West 49th Street (between Broadway and 8th Avenue) — 10 am — fourth Monday of Each Month (March 24th, April 28th). 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 MetroCards and Pay-Per-Ride MetroCards, and they refill MetroCards and Reduced-Fare MetroCards.

Buses and vans will be in my district on the following dates and locations:

- March 11, 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- March 11, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus

- March 11, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- March 19, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
- March 19, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- March 19, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- March 20, 8:30 - 10:30 am, 47 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- March 20, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, 28 Street & 2 Avenue – Van
- March 25, 10:30 am, 92 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- March 25, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm., 86 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- March 25, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street & Lexington Avenue – Bus
- April 1, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
- April 1, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- April 1, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- April 2, 9 - 10:30 am, 79 Street & 3 Avenue – Bus
- April 2, 11 am - 1 pm, 79 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- April 2, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, 72 Street & York Avenue – Bus
- April 3, 9 - 10 am, 57 Street and 1 Avenue – Van
- April 3, 10:30 - 11:30 am, 57 Street and 3 Avenue – Van
- April 3, 12:30 - 2:30 pm, 68 Street and 1 Avenue – 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

Restoring Food Stamp Benefits

I am extremely pleased that last month Governor Cuomo took action to preserve approximately \$457 million a year in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that would otherwise be cut by the recently enacted federal Farm Bill. The bill was slated to cut SNAP benefits an average of \$127 per month for nearly 300,000 households in New York.

I had reached out to the Governor's office to encourage them to reallocate funding to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), as the federal Farm Bill had tied food stamp benefit levels to the amount of HEAP assistance households receive. The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), has agreed to dedicate approximately \$6 million in additional federal HEAP funding to maintain SNAP benefit levels for affected households. The funding will be used to increase the HEAP benefit of SNAP recipients whose heat is included in the rent, such as residents of public housing. The higher HEAP benefit ensures these households will remain eligible for the highest SNAP allowance under the new rules.

This devastating cut would have taken food out of the mouths of our most vulnerable populations, including seniors and families with children. In addition, this particular cut to SNAP benefits had a disproportionate impact on Northeastern states, and New York's neighbors have taken or are considering similar actions to preserve benefit levels. Connecticut also enacted this policy last month.

Preserving SNAP is a benefit to both the recipients of this aid and the New York economy as a whole. Because SNAP benefits are immediately spent, by reallocating \$6 million, New York State has ensured that our local merchants do not face a \$457 million loss in spending on food. I applaud Governor Cuomo for taking this critical step to simultaneously fight hunger and infuse revenue into local businesses.

Protecting Employees' Right to Access Reproductive Health Services

I and my colleague Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee recently introduced legislation banning employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of their personal reproductive health decisions (S.6578A/A.8769). Known to advocates and legislators as the "Boss Bill," this legislation would close a glaring loophole in New York's existing workplace anti-discrimination laws.

The bill's introduction was prompted by the proliferation of more than 100 federal lawsuits by employers seeking to deny their employees the birth control coverage benefits they are guaranteed through their healthcare plans under the federal Affordable Care Act. At least one large national chain store, Hobby Lobby, is among the growing number of employers trying to cut female employees off from access to birth control and the ability to make their own healthcare decisions.

The federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires that health insurance plans cover all FDA-approved birth control methods without out-of-pocket costs. This benefit represented a huge step forward for women's health and equality, expanding coverage and eliminating costs for literally millions of women. However, as has been made obvious by the myriad lawsuits from businesses seeking to strip this coverage, some bosses are committed to inserting themselves into their employees' private healthcare decisions.

New York State has demonstrated a commitment to outlawing discrimination in the workplace by passing laws protecting individuals from various forms of discrimination, but discrimination on the basis of individuals' reproductive healthcare decisions can fall into a gap in the existing law. To address this, (S.6578A/A.8769) adds a new Section 203-E to the New York State Labor Law, prohibiting an employer from discriminating against an employee on the basis of the employee's (or a dependent's) reproductive health decisions, including a decision to use or access a particular drug, device or medical service. It also prohibits discrimination based on an employer's personal beliefs about such services.

In New York, in the 21st century, no boss should be able to tell employees whether they can exercise their right to access birth control. This bill to protect a woman's basic right to make her own decisions about contraception or abortion, free from reprisals, should pass quickly in both houses.