



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

## World AIDS Day

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November 30, 2010

ISSUE:

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### News From New York State

**Senator Shirley L. Huntley**

**For Immediate Release:** December 1, 2010

**Contact: Antonio Rodriguez** | [arodrigu@nysenate.gov](mailto:arodrigu@nysenate.gov) | (518) 455-3531

### **SENATOR SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY ON WORLD AIDS DAY, LEARN ABOUT HIV/AIDS AND GET TESTED**

Countries across the globe will spend December 1st honoring those who have fallen to HIV/AIDS, and in doing so use the day to increase awareness of the rising infection rates and what can be done to stop this trend. So throughout the month of December, Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) is urging people to increase their own awareness of HIV/AIDS and get tested.

“There are two steps that we can all take to do our part in helping curb HIV/AIDS infection rates—be aware and get tested,” said Senator Huntley. “Being aware of the facts about HIV is a tool to making the right moves in taking care of one’s own health and well-being, as well as those around them. Also, getting tested is a free and easy process which we all need to do, regardless of our age, race, gender or sexual orientation.”

HIV is a virus that attacks the body’s immune system, which is the body’s defense against diseases. The disease affects millions of people around the world, and according to the New York State HIV/AIDS Surveillance Annual Report, as of December 2008 there are more than 126,000 New Yorkers diagnosed and living with HIV or AIDS. It should also be noted that statistics are showing HIV/AIDS should no longer be thought of as a young persons’ disease, as 75 percent of persons living with the disease are age 40 or older.

One way to stop the rise in infections rates is to be aware of the facts of the disease, including how one becomes infected and the ways it can be transmitted. HIV/AIDS is most often contracted through sexual activity, which practicing safe sex can help to prevent.

Testing is also crucial to controlling the rates of infection. Because symptoms of the disease are indistinguishable, people are often not aware they have the disease and spread it to others.

In the borough of Queens where Senator Huntley represents Senate District 10 there are HIV/AIDS centers designed to better aid those who may have the virus and/or disease or want to learn preventative measures. Also present in the borough is the AIDS Center of Queens County, which has a myriad of services such as preventative, legal, housing, and testing. This center also has community training for AIDS related to specific demographics such as members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, adolescents, Latinos, African-American, and post incarceration.

Senator Huntley has also taken a proactive measure against the deadly disease by introducing critical legislation in the New York State Senate. S. 4484 calls for informed consent, the routine offer of an HIV test to all New Yorkers between the ages of 13 and 64. In 2005, half of all new HIV infections were among black men and

women. AIDS is the leading killer of black women between the ages of 25 and 34 and the fourth leading cause of death among black men

“There is a certain stigma that comes with being tested for HIV/AIDS and we need to work hard at removing this stigma to do what is best for our health,” Senator Huntley continued. “Talk to friends about being tested, even set up appointments with them, because this is an issue that we need to have open and honest dialogue about. I encourage all New Yorkers to make testing an annual part of their lives.”

In order to find the closest HIV/AIDS testing location to you, please visit [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org). Nearly all locations provide free testing and literature, as well as other important information and services.

To find out more about HIV/AIDS, please visit [www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids).