



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Queens Chronicle OpEd by NYS Senator Joseph Addabbo (D-Howard Beach)

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR January 31, 2013

### ***Three Months after Sandy – Some Progress, but Still So Much Work to Do [1,001 words]***

On the day after Superstorm Sandy, I got in my car and toured the district. My Howard Beach office was destroyed like many of the homes in the area, there was a boat in the middle of Cross Bay Boulevard in Broad Channel, schools were closed, and the boardwalk in Rockaway was blown two blocks from the beach where it should have been. Today, my office is restored, the boat in Broad Channel is gone, schools are open and the boardwalk in Rockaway—well, there's still so much work to do. It has been three long months since Sandy hit our communities and yet, the southern one-third of my district is recuperating. At this time, over 7,000 residents and businesses are without power in Rockaway. The areas of Broad Channel, Howard Beach and Hamilton Beach are suffering economically and emotionally. But, it is important for residents and small businesses to know that they are not in this rebuilding period alone. Practically each day, I reassure people throughout my district that they can use my office as a resource for information and programs that have been established in the wake of Sandy, visit the FEMA office located next door to my Howard Beach office, or merely be the person to talk to when an individual needs to vent.

Currently, my Howard Beach office is still answering 30-40 phone calls a day just on Sandy issues from residents of Howard Beach, Hamilton Beach and Ozone Park. The complaints reference the slowness of Rapid Recovery, FEMA rejection and how to appeal, property insurance coverage rejections, payments jointly made to the homeowner and the mortgage holder, National Grid, frozen gas lines, unemployment and temporary housing issues for those who were displaced by the storm. Still so much work to do.

The situation seems to get worse as I travel south through Broad Channel and Rockaway. My staff member handling the storm related problems in those areas, Sandee Doremus (what a time to have a name pronounced the same way as the storm!) still receives a number of new cases daily. While some of the issues in the southern part of the district are the same as the northern part, in Rockaway, we have to address the upcoming beach season and the rebuilding of the boardwalk.

In my Middle Village satellite office, my staff handled a call from a Glendale constituent about his summer bungalow in Breezy Point and its related insurance problem, and from a Middle Village woman whose decades-long summer home in Rocky Point, L.I., was near a private road that was badly in need of repair. Still so much work to do.

A concern that stretches throughout my district is the future fate of the local businesses in the area. From the larger chain stores like Staples to the critically important neighborhood stores like Sal's Meat Market, it is essential to the morale of the community and employment of local people that these businesses get the assistance they need to reopen.

As elected officials, we are given a unique opportunity to assist during the aftermath of Sandy. Whether its legislatively or financially through governmental funding, we need to exhaust every means possible to address the concerns of our people. Currently, as a member of the Senate Bipartisan Task Force on Hurricane Sandy, I am working with a group of other legislators, whose districts were particularly devastated by the superstorm, to address its many tragic human and economic consequences. In light of the tremendous damage that was done to local businesses that found themselves in the direct path of Sandy, I am also working on legislation to lend a helping hand to merchants whose buildings were harmed by the storm.

Legislatively, I am also co-sponsoring legislation (S.2128) known as the "New York City Hurricane Sandy Assessment Relief Act," which is designed to reduce property tax burdens for New York City homeowners whose properties were badly damaged by the storm. Without question, people who have already seen their homes crumble in the wake of Sandy shouldn't bear the emotional and financial burden of trying to pay full property taxes on their devastated properties.

Apart from individual pieces of legislation, the proposed State Budget for 2013-2014 will clearly focus in large part on New York's response to Sandy both now and in the future. We will be receiving billions of dollars from the federal government to aid in these efforts and the legislature, in the coming months, we will be reviewing the governor's Executive Budget to determine the best use of these resources. The governor has proposed an array of initiatives to address the impact of Sandy—ranging from community and home rebuilding programs, to broad infrastructure improvements designed to reduce potential damage from future storms, to new efforts to bolster our emergency response network throughout New York. Together with my Senate and Assembly colleagues, and particularly with my fellow legislators on the Hurricane Sandy Task Force, I will be reviewing these recommendations very carefully.

I encourage residents and business owners to reach out to their elected officials for additional information on governmental assistance—from the city, state and federal levels—and other programs that exist to help them recover.

For the sake of our communities, for the sake of our neighbors, for the sake of our business owners, we must work together to get the people of South Queens back on their feet and thriving again. I know I will eventually get to witness the stores along Cross Bay Boulevard reopen, walk the rebuilt boardwalk in Rockaway and see the sand-replenished beaches protected by more rock jetties as a result of federal funding. But, I also realize that many homes and businesses in my district that were destroyed by the storm will not be back. In addition to all the Sandy-related issues, I now need to work with my constituents and inform them of the requirements brought by the new proposed flood maps. Three months after Sandy, some progress, but still so much work to do.

*Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr., is the State Senator for the 15th District, representing in whole or in part, the Queens neighborhoods of Broad Channel, Elmhurst, Forest Hills, Glendale, Howard Beach, Hamilton Beach, Kew Gardens, Kew Gardens Hills, Maspeth, Middle Village, Ozone Park, South Ozone Park, Rego Park, Forest Hills, Richmond Hill, Ridgewood, Woodhaven, Woodside, and most of the Rockaways.*

--

Judy Close, Press Secretary

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

15th Senate District - Satellite Office

66-85 73rd Place

Middle Village, NY 11379

Ph: 718-497-1630