



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

February 2009 Community Report

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Dear Neighbor:

The following is a summary of some of my office's activities since my last community report:

Adopting the FY 2008-9 Deficit Reduction Plan

On February 3, working with the Governor and the Assembly, the Senate passed a critical deficit reduction plan. This legislation will result in closing a budget gap of approximately \$1.6 billion for the current fiscal year and will improve the State's bond rating. This will significantly decrease the costs of funding for public works and other vital projects.

This was one of the most difficult votes I have cast during my career in the State Senate. Even though I knew that vital programs and services would be cut as a result, I felt I had no other choice than to vote for this plan because we are in truly desperate times. While both the Senate and the Assembly, along with Governor Paterson, have been working since

August to find solutions to the State's mounting fiscal crisis, the crisis grows exponentially every day. Urgent action was needed and the legislation was the solution. It was painful but I truly believe it is the first step toward the economic recovery of New York.

Health Committee News: Health Care Budget Hearing

In my first formal appearance as Chair of the New York State Senate Health Committee, I was among the legislators presiding over the February 2 Joint Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committee Hearing on Health Care in the 2009-2010 Budget. Although it is a difficult time to assume the committee's helm, as the economy is forcing us to consider healthcare cuts and hospital closures, I am grateful to be in a position to make sure that cuts that must be made are done carefully, and that they will be minimally harmful to those most in need.

There is good news however, as my colleagues in the Federal government have passed a stimulus package that includes substantial support for health care. Even so, health care cuts will still be necessary, new sources of revenue will have to be found, and much-delayed reforms to our State's health care system will have to be made to ensure that our health care dollars are being spent as wisely as possible.

Addressing the New York Pediatric Society

On February 24, in my capacity as Chair of the Senate Health Committee, I addressed the New York Pediatric Society, an organization that represents pediatricians and pediatric medical and surgical specialists that holds monthly meetings to discuss issues pertaining to the health and welfare of children and adolescents. In the speech, I reiterated the importance of primary and preventive care to children's health and my and the Senate's

efforts to bring New York up from 44th in the nation for doctor's reimbursement by supporting reforms. I also noted our strong support for the continued expansion of Child Health Plus, a state health insurance plan for income eligible children under the age of 19, and for collaboration with the federal government over additional funding and coverage expansions.

Participating in the Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenant Association Meeting

On February 8, I attended the Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenant Association (ST-PCV TA) meeting at Simon Baruch Middle School 104. I was pleased to see that so many residents turned out to learn about the energy saving measures, including submetering, being considered by Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village owner Tishman Speyer. I appreciated the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority's (NYSERDA) brief but comprehensive presentation and all the questions, comments and concerns that were raised during the meeting. As New York State Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, New York City Councilmember Dan Garodnick, ST-PCV TA representatives and I continue to negotiate with Tishman Speyer regarding these measures, we will make sure that tenant concerns are addressed and aggressively fight any attempt to pass the costs of implementation on to tenants.

Speaking Out for a 11th Avenue Rezoning

I was pleased to attend the January 28 Public Meeting on the proposed 11th Avenue Rezoning held by Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) and New York Department of City Planning (City Planning). I expressed my appreciation to CB4 and City Planning, co-applicants in this application, for their hard work and attention to community interests during this process

and to the West Side Neighborhood Alliance (WSNA) for making sure that the community and neighborhood's needs are represented.

I am very optimistic about this plan given all the progress that has already been made, and at the meeting I reiterated some points to keep in mind as we move forward. These include maintaining the low-rise character of Hell's Kitchen; making sure that affordable housing is plentiful, permanent, and available to low, moderate and middle income families of all sizes; planning intelligently so that we have sufficient elementary and middle school seats for this growing neighborhood; protecting existing tenants with harassment and demolition restrictions; providing the open spaces, pedestrian sidewalk space and mass transit that enlivens a community; and being sensitive to both the positive and negative effects that come with the combination of residential, commercial and manufacturing uses.

Once again, thank you to CB4, City Planning and WSNA. I am confident that your continued collaboration and community consultation will lead to a successful rezoning.

Applauding CB7's Resolution on Fordham

I wish to commend Manhattan Community Board 7 on its decision, at the end of its well attended, well run January 21 special Full Board meeting on Fordham University's Lincoln Center Master Plan, to amend the already strong resolution drafted by the Land Use Committee to reflect the concerns expressed by the overwhelming majority of neighborhood residents. The adopted resolution unconditionally rejects Fordham's application and is reflective of both the community's interests and the New York City Zoning Resolution, which states that waivers in the Special Lincoln Square District may only be granted to "facilitate good design," and not to generate revenue. By adopting this amended resolution, CB7 underscored its continued commitment to excellence and community input. I pledge to

continue to work with my colleagues in government, CB7 and other community representatives to ensure that development in this densely populated neighborhood is responsible and contextual.

Facilitating Human Rights Law Training for Owner of Lafayette Bakery

As I stated in a January 28 "[Letter to the Editor](#)" in The Villager, which I co-authored with New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, I was saddened and disgusted to learn that Lafayette Bakery on Greenwich Avenue sold what the owner, Ted Kefalinos, termed "Drunken Negro Face Cookies" during the week of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and President Barack Obama's Inauguration. My office, along with Speaker Quinn's, urged Mr. Kefalinos to take steps to ensure that he never engages in such an offensive act again, including participating in a training from the New York State Division of Human Rights (NYSDHR) on the State's Human Rights Law. He consented and last Tuesday the NYSDHR conducted a training for Mr. Kefalinos on his obligations under the law as a business owner in New York State. Although participating in this training does not in any way absolve him of the transgression he committed, education is a crucial tool with which to fight ignorance and insensitivity. While Mr. Kefalinos has said that he did not intend to offend or discriminate against any individual or group, I continue to urge him to pursue more extensive sensitivity training so that he understands the severity and implications of his actions.

Supporting a Lamartine Place Historic District

On January 14, I submitted [testimony](#) to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) regarding the proposed Lamartine Place Historic District on West 29th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. These handsome Greek Revival row houses date

from the 1840's, a period from which there are few remnants left in the City, and are notable for their period details, brick and brownstone facades, and front gardens. Besides their obvious architectural merit, the buildings are rooted in the abolitionist movement and served as a focal point in the Civil War Draft Riots of 1863 due to the owners' supposed or real abolitionist ties. In addition, thanks to the wonderful research of historian and architect Fern Luskin, we now know that 339 West 29th Street was a station along the Underground Railroad, an amazing discovery given that documented existing Underground Railroad Stations are a rarity in New York City. I am hopeful that LPC will act expeditiously to approve this important reminder of our City and neighborhood's place in American history.

Approaching the Deadline for Unlimited Bill Introduction

Each legislative session, Senators are given a certain timeframe to introduce an unlimited number of bills to the Senate. This year, the deadline is April 27th, after which Senators can only introduce 10 bills until December 31st. I encourage my constituents to reach out to my office regarding any legislative ideas that you may have as soon as possible.