



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Bill Perkins

Rat Attack!

BILL PERKINS January 18, 2012

| ISSUE: **HEALTH, MTA (METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY)**



Although the constituents in the 30th senatorial district vary ethnically, culturally and economically, they all encounter the same chronic rat problem whenever they use the subway system. Most people have a visceral reaction to rats, but that alone is not why we must make every effort to rid them from our subways.

Rats can carry and transmit diseases, some of which are fatal to humans and dogs. Rats can spread disease through their urine, feces and from bites. Rats also carry parasites like fleas, worms and mites which can spread diseases as well. At the time of this writing, the

Malaysian government is battling an increase of Leptospirosis, a rat borne illness which has killed nearly 100 people this year. While New York city is not Malaysia, the public health crisis they are confronting, underscores the potential danger posed by an out of control rat population. In particular, New York city's subway system, with its densely packed trains and enclosed spaces, provides an ideal environment for communicable diseases to spread quickly.

New Yorkers think we have a serious rodent problem in our subways that can be resolved. This is the news that comes from a district-wide rat survey conducted by my office over the past 6 weeks. Over 15,000 surveys were distributed, in the mail, on-line and in-person at train stations. People's passion for this issue was evident wherever we handed out surveys. Within days of our mailing, we received stacks of mail from constituents who had taken the time to fill out, stamp and mail back our surveys. The response was overwhelming.

As the results came in, three things are clear: 30TH District residents overwhelmingly feel they are facing a 'severe' problem, they believe that the problem of rats rampaging through the subway is partly due to inept pest-control by the Metropolitan Transit Authority and most feel strongly that the conduct of train customers, eating in stations, on trains, and carelessly discarding refuse on the tracks or platforms, plays an important role in compounding the problem.