



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## Fall 2019 Newsletter

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY December 16, 2019

| ISSUE: **CHILDREN & FAMILIES, KINSHIP FAMILIES, EDUCATION, CREDIT UNIONS, DEED THEFT AND EQUITY THEFT**

Dear Neighbor,

I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as your representative in the New York State Senate.

Under the leadership of Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the new Senate Majority, the state passed historic laws transforming the lives of millions of New Yorkers. While 2019 ushered in landmark change to our state from passage of RHA, CCCA, GENDA, CCPA, criminal justice reform and so much more, our work is only beginning.

I look forward to our continued partnership on the issues important to our community and our State.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) announced a comprehensive redesign of the Brooklyn local and express bus networks, which will redraw the entire borough's bus routes for the first time.

This historic undertaking will use public feedback, multiple sources of data and analysis, and a thorough review of demographics and upcoming developments to create a bus network that reimagines service for 650,000 Brooklyn bus riders.

The MTA will collaborate with the Department of Transportation to bring the following improvements to the Brooklyn Bus Network:

- Expand bus priority
- Increase the frequency of high capacity buses on major roads
- Improving bus stop spacing to speed up customers' commute time
- Modify bus routes that are low-performing and circuitous
- Reduce route redundancy and subway competition
- Improve off-peak service frequency and coverage

### **About the Brooklyn Bus Network:**

- 63 local routes serving approximately 640,000 weekday customers
- 9 express routes serving approximately 9,000 weekday customers
- The borough's local bus ridership has declined 14% between 2016 and 2019

- Brooklyn express bus ridership has declined 10% between 2016 and 2019
- Bus speeds boroughwide are currently 7.7 mph, a decline of 3% since 2016

For more information, visit [new.mta.info/brooklynbusredesign](http://new.mta.info/brooklynbusredesign) or call 511.

The event was hosted by Rev. Clinton M. Miller and Brown Memorial Baptist Church and honored women leaders who have helped move our state forward. Honorees included Attorney General Letitia A. James, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright, Assemblywoman Inez Dickens, Reverend Dr. Que English, Co-Pastor of Bronx Christian Fellowship, Reverend Dr. Elaine M. Flake, Co-Pastor of Greater Allen AME Cathedral and Divinah "Dee" Bailey, Founder of Watchful Eye.

The 400 Foundation is a five-borough, faith-based campaign, established and led by pastors and clergy across New York City whose congregants and communities continue to suffer from 400 years of injustice. The foundation is continuing the vision set forth by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for economic justice. For more info, visit <http://weare400.com>

The event also honored kinship caregivers from around the state including four from New York City: Maria Lemons(posthumously), Doris Williams, Maggie Lee and Gloria E. Woods.

The KinCare Coalition is a network of kinship professionals and caregivers, led by the NYS KinCare Navigator. The NYS Kinship Navigator is an information, referral and advocacy

program for kinship caregivers in New York State. A kinship caregiver is an individual who is caring for a child that is not biologically their own. There are an estimated 179,000 caregivers, 131,000 of whom are grandparents, in NYS.

For more information or assistance, visit [www.nysnavigator.org](http://www.nysnavigator.org).

### **Deed theft Bill**

Effective immediately, this law (S1688 Montgomery/A5615 Weinstein) provides greater protections for owners of homes that are in default or foreclosure. It also strengthens laws regulating distressed property "consultants" who provide services to prevent property loss.

The "Deed Theft Bill" addresses these issues by:

- Prohibiting abusive and deceptive behaviors such as pretending to be law enforcement or government representatives, taking temporary ownership of a deed, or engaging in harassment of the homeowner or the homeowner's family.
- Eliminating the requirement that a homeowner post a bond in order to file a lawsuit to stop a deed transfer.
- Prohibiting loan modification consultants from requiring upfront fees for services.
- Extending the amount of time a homeowner has to rescind transactions with distressed property consultants from 5 days to 14 days.
- Providing a clear legal path to restore the title of a property when there has been a criminal conviction based on fraudulent actions concerning a property transfer.

## **Deed Theft Update**

Governor Cuomo called on the NYS Department of Financial Services (DFS) to launch an investigation into deed fraud and deceptive practices targeted at homeowners in Brooklyn. Homeowners who believe they may have been a victim of deed fraud or unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices in regard to the sale or attempted purchase of their home may call the Foreclosure Relief Hotline at: 1-800-342-3736 or visit:  
[https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/help\\_for\\_homeowners](https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/help_for_homeowners)

## **Adoptee Rights Bill**

The historic Clean Bill of Adoptee Rights (S3419 Montgomery/A5494 Weprin) restores unrestricted access to original birth certificates for all adult adoptees. Since 1936, access to certified, long-form original birth certificates has been barred without a court order. Beginning January 15, 2020, parity will be restored to all New Yorkers seeking access to their family heritage and medical histories.

New York is the tenth state to grant adoptees unrestricted access to birth certificates. Senator Montgomery extends her appreciation to the thousands of adoptees from across the nation and New York State who worked tirelessly for decades to help pass this important legislation.

## **Kinship Care Bill**

This law (S6405 Montgomery/A8059 Jaffee) encourages the placement of youth in foster care with relatives instead of strangers by making a much-needed amendment to the Family Court Act. It expands the definition of people who are eligible to petition the court to become foster parents, who are related to the child:

- Through blood, marriage or adoption;
- Through a half sibling of the child through blood, marriage, or adoption and the person is or are the prospective or appointed relative guardian of the half sibling; or
- By a positive relationship with the child, including, but not limited to, a stepparent, godparent, neighbor or family friend.

This law expands the eligibility and increases placement options for children in Foster Care, making so many more relatives eligible to participate in the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment program (Kin-GAP). Kin-GAP is a new permanency option for children in long-term foster care placements with relative caregivers and provides financial support and medical coverage for the child. For more information about this program, visit <https://ocfs.ny.gov/kinship/kingap.asp>

### **Funding for Family Support Services**

Legislation that Senator Montgomery authored regarding Family Support Centers was included in the FY 2019-2020 Budget and would reinvest some of the resources currently used for Persons In Need of Supervision out of home detention and placement to support a model

of effective community-based intervention

### **Credit Union Bill**

S727A Montgomery/A3320 Zebrowski would allow credit unions to receive the same economic incentives as banks to operate in underserved communities through the Banking Development District (BDD) program. The BDD program was enacted to incentivize banks to locate branches in communities designated as underserved by the Department of Financial Services. Participating banks are eligible to receive up to \$10 million in subsidized deposits from the State of New York to lower financial risk and encourage lending in these communities. Many of these areas have few to no banking institutions and instead have to rely on alternative, costly and sometimes predatory options to fill in the gaps.

There are 355 credit unions in New York, serving over 5 million members, and they are uniquely positioned to advance the goals of the BDD program. Credit unions are nonprofit, locally owned institutions that answer to their members. They make less risky investments, and earnings are returned to their members through lower interest rates on loans and more favorable rates on savings and retirement accounts.

### **Statewide Central Registry of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) Reform**

S6427 Montgomery/A8060 Jaffee addresses some very important issues that have persisted with the SCR:

- Creates a higher standard of evidence for child abuse and neglect findings
- Allows indicated cases of neglect to be conditionally sealed for purposes of employment after 8 years

- Provides parents with an opportunity for a fair hearing.

Almost 50,000 parents are added to the SCR every year for child neglect. Most of these parents remain on this list for up to 28 years, and are barred from numerous jobs as well as participating in activities at their children's schools. The vast majority of the jobs that affect parents on the SCR are jobs most often performed by women, often single heads of households, and people of color.

With the passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, New York's ambitious and comprehensive climate and clean energy legislation, the NY State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) is leading efforts to build a new green infrastructure. The development of offshore wind energy is an important component as New York plans to develop 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind power by 2035, enough to power up to 6 million homes.

The multi-billion-dollar offshore wind industry has the potential to provide more than 10,000 high-quality and well-paying jobs in manufacturing, construction, installation, research and development, operations and maintenance, and other fields. New York State is working with project developers to promote and fund the first generation of major offshore wind port and supply chain infrastructure, as well as workforce development programs to educate, train, and employ New Yorkers. These initiatives will help anchor the industry's long-term home in our state.



NYS is partnering with educational institutions and the private sector to maximize job training opportunities for New Yorkers:

#### Offshore Wind Training Institute (OWTI)

- A collaboration of industry, universities, nonprofits, and organized labor, this \$20 million initiative will offer workers across New York pathways to quality careers within the clean energy sector through new job training programs, tailored college curricula, and enhanced academic research opportunities.

#### Community and Workforce Benefits Fund (CWB Fund)

- The CWB Fund will provide \$3 million for industry certification, training, and outreach programs to connect New Yorkers around the State with offshore wind job opportunities. The Fund will prioritize low-income and other disadvantaged communities.

#### New York Advisory Council on Offshore Wind Economic and Workforce Development

- Proposed by Governor Cuomo, the Council will provide expert guidance on responsible offshore wind development that captures long-term economic benefits for the State.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JOB AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, VISIT:

NYSERDA Offshore Wind Workforce Page

[nyserdera.ny.gov/offshorewind-workforce](http://nyserdera.ny.gov/offshorewind-workforce)

American Wind Energy Association Jobs Board

[awea-jobs.careerwebsite.com](http://awea-jobs.careerwebsite.com)

WINDEXchange Energy Training Program Map

[windexchange.energy.gov/training](http://windexchange.energy.gov/training)

Visit [nyserdera.ny.gov/offshorewind](http://nyserdera.ny.gov/offshorewind) for more information on offshore wind in New York State.

(\*Information courtesy of NYSERDA)

Senator Montgomery and Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright hosted New York City Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza for a visit to Boys and Girls High School Campus and Old Boys High School campus. The visits provided the Chancellor with an opportunity to share his vision for the public education system and to hear directly from student representatives about their concerns.

### **Boys and Girls High School Campus**

Student representatives from Nelson Mandela School of Social Justice, Research and Service High School and Boys and Girls High School spoke with the Chancellor about the need for:

- Access to AP classes
- Paid internship opportunities for scholars
- Assessment and repair of the Welding Unit
- Upgrade Electrical Units in the Engineering Suite
- Lighting, Electrical and Technology upgrade for auditorium
- Plumbing and Electrical upgrade for Washer and Dryer
- Resources for the Research and Service Pantry
- Bleachers and stadium lighting for Nelson Mandela Field

In September, Senator Montgomery welcomed Chancellor Carranza back to Bedford Stuyvesant for a follow-up meeting with the principals of Boys and Girls High School Campus and members of the Boys and Girls High Advisory Board for an update on the issues raised by the scholars. The Chancellor shared that since the initial meeting, eight AP classes have been added, including Environmental Science, U.S. and World History, Calculus, Language and Literature. Additionally, funding was provided for the Research and Service food pantry, which serves all the scholars on campus and upgrades to the student laundry are expected to be completed soon. The Chancellor also committed to have a comprehensive assessment done to determine the needs of the building's electrical system, which will include the welding unit, engineering suite and auditorium.

Today's schools are more than just classrooms. Boys and Girls High Campus is a village that truly serves the needs of our young people by providing supplemental support and services, such as the food pantry and the washer and dryer. It is vital that they continue to receive the resources and support that allow them to do this work.

Senator Montgomery worked in coordination with the NYS Maple Producers' Association to bring the Maple Truck to PS 15 and PS 676. The Maple Truck is a student-focused agriculture literacy exhibit that provides visitors with a first-hand look at the maple industry - how maple syrup was discovered and collected from maple trees, and how maple sap is harvested and processed into pure, sweet maple syrup.

Keith Schiebel, Maple Support Specialist and TST New Visions Life Sciences Program Future Farmers of America members from Ithaca, New York traveled to Brooklyn to lead demonstrations. The program is housed at Cornell University and administered by TST BOCES - a career and Technical Education Center. For more information about the program, visit: <https://tstboces.org/career-and-technical-education/new-visions/life-sciences-program/>. To learn more about the Maple Experience, visit <https://www.nysmaple.com/educational-resources/>

Scholars from Brooklyn Academy High School, Pathways to Graduation and Uncommon Collegiate Charter High School shared with the Chancellor their concerns about:

- Strict disciplinary procedures that disproportionately affect black and latinx scholars
- Addressing the causes and threat of gang violence
- Ensuring alternative high schools receive the same level of resources as traditional schools
- Tailoring a learning environment that addresses the needs of the older populations at alternative high schools
- Incorporating more career and life skills-centered curriculum

- Access to more nutritious school lunches, including halal and kosher meals
- The personal impact of co-location on a student who loved the transfer school but would be leaving because the current classroom space was too small and was an uncomfortable learning environment.
- Access to extracurricular activities and field trips

Senator Montgomery is proud to serve a district where so many constituents have embraced urban farming and initiatives to expand it into our classrooms. There are several grant opportunities for schools interested in starting or expanding K-12 Agriculture Education programs in their schools.

**New Program Incentive Grants:** Provides funding to new and growing agricultural education programs that are struggling to secure necessary resources. These resources may include, but are not limited to: curriculum development, professional development, program development, resource acquisitions, and program coordination. Applications are due December 20, 2019.

**Grow With Us Grant:** To help expand school gardens, teachers can earn a rack-based grow system, a bundle of three tower gardens, or a high tunnel for their schools. Applications due January 3, 2020.

**Agricultural Literacy Grant:** To support any curricular-related activity a teacher is interested in pursuing, to include, but not limited to: field trips, purchasing food to cook in the classroom, school garden creation or expansion, and more! This is a rolling application grant, and will open again in Spring 2020.

The agricultural education outreach programs at Cornell University have created a guide for teachers interested in applying for funding. To access the Agricultural Education New Program Resource Guide and to learn more about the grant opportunities, visit [www.nysffa.org/start-a-program](http://www.nysffa.org/start-a-program)

The Brooklyn STEAM Center is New York City's first public school program embedded inside the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The facility is an innovative career and technical training hub with access to over 400 businesses and located within a 300-acre industrial park.

To be eligible for the Brooklyn STEAM Center, scholars must be enrolled and have completed an extensive curriculum during the 9th and 10th grades at one of the eight local partner high schools across Brooklyn. The schools are: **George Westinghouse Career and Technical Education High School, Benjamin Banneker Academy, Bedford Academy High School, High School for Global Citizenship, Science Skills Center High School, Science Technology and Research (STAR) Early College High School, Boys and Girls High School and Medgar Evers College Preparatory School.**

In the 11th and 12th grades, scholars attend the STEAM center in a shared instructional model, which means they get to spend half of their school day at their academic high schools and the other part of the day at the STEAM center. Scholars may major in one of the following five pathways: Computer Science, Culinary Arts and Business Management, Construction Technology, Design and Engineering, and Media and Film. By the completion of the two-year program, scholars would have the opportunity to earn a paid internship focused on their field of study with one of the many businesses at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. In the 2018-2019 school year 79% out of the 96 founding scholars graduated from the STEAM Center with an industrial credential. Currently there are 278 scholars enrolled in the STEAM Center, preparing themselves to thrive in our rapidly changing workforce.

Brooklyn STEAM Center

141 Flushing Avenue, Building 77, Suite 301 \* Brooklyn, NY, 11205

Email: [info@brooklynsteamcenter.org](mailto:info@brooklynsteamcenter.org) \* Phone: 347.464.3680

<http://www.brooklynsteamcenter.org/>

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2019-S3419**

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- Introduced
  
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Establishes the right of adoptees to receive a certified copy of their birth certificate upon reaching the age of 18

February 06, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Velmanette Montgomery**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2019-S727A

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- Introduced
  - - In Committee Assembly
    - In Committee Senate
  - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
    - On Floor Calendar Senate
  - - Passed Assembly
    - Passed Senate
  - Delivered to Governor



- Signed By Governor

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Relates to the banking development district program

January 08, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Velmanette Montgomery**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2019-S6405

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor

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Relates to an application of a relative to become a foster parent

June 07, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Velmanette Montgomery**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2019-S1688

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Provides for the regulation of distressed home loans

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January 15, 2019

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Velmanette Montgomery**

Do you support this bill?