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## **SENATE BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE ON HURRICANE SANDY RECOVERY TOURS BROOKLYN AND STATEN ISLAND**

### **Senators View Damaged Communities and Meet with City Leaders About Recovery Efforts**

The New York State Senate's Bipartisan Task Force on Hurricane Sandy Recovery today visited hard-hit communities in Brooklyn and Staten Island to tour storm damage and speak with local officials, business leaders, and individuals about the progress and challenges of the ongoing recovery efforts.

Tours of Staten Island, Coney Island, Sheepshead Bay, and Gerritsen Beach provided Task Force members with the ability to witness the extensive storm damage and recovery efforts in those parts of New York City. This was the fourth meeting of the Bipartisan Senate Task Force on Hurricane Sandy Recovery, which first met on December 10, 2012, in the Rockaways in Queens. Tours and meetings also took place in Nassau County and Rockland County.

Senate Independent Conference Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) was joined by task force Co-Chairs Senator Andrew Lanza (R,I,C-Staten Island) and Senator Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens), and task force members Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), Senator Martin J. Golden (R-Brooklyn), Senator Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley), and Senator Phil Boyle (R,C,I-Suffolk County).

Following the tour, the task force is holding a roundtable discussion at the Senate Majority Coalition's New York City office. State and city officials, businesses, and organizations anticipated to attend include: Assemblyman Joseph Borelli; New York State Department of Financial Services Superintendent Benjamin Lawskey and Senior Advisor Marty Schwartzman; Gregorio Mayers and Tokumbo Shombowale from the New York City Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency; Deputy Brooklyn Borough President Sandra Chapman and Nan Blackshear; Representatives from the NYPD and FDNY; Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York President Gary LaBarbera; College of Staten Island Interim President Dr. William Fritz; Red Cross of Greater New York CEO Josh Lockwood and Alexander Lutz, Jr.; Staten Island Legal Services Co-Director of the Homeowner Defense Project Margaret Becker; Queens Legal Services Project Director Jennifer Ching; Leticia Remauro of Staten Island Community Board 1; Richard Melnyk of Continental Home Loans; Astella Development Corporation Executive Director Judy Orlando; John Tabacco of the Staten Island Sandy Relief Citizens Committee; Coney Island Gospel Assembly Pastor Constance Hulla; The Nature Conservancy Chief Conservation and External Affairs Officer Stuart Gruskin; Muhammed Acikgoz of the Turkish Cultural Center Staten Island; Kristina Baldwin of the Property Casualty Insurers Assoc. of America; Jeff Greenfield of the Council of Insurance Brokers of

Greater New York; Gary Henning – American Insurance Association; New York Insurance Association President Ellen Melchionni; and small business owners.

The participants will provide critical input about the challenges they are facing and what steps can be taken to help improve preparedness and response for future storms.

The approximate number of homes destroyed or damaged by Sandy totals 305,000, displacing 40,000 people in New York City alone. Approximately 265,300 businesses were affected, resulting in significant losses of revenue and increasing unemployment.

The Senate's task force is identifying areas most in need of recovery assistance and reviewing the rebuilding and storm planning policies to remove roadblocks and ensure better storm preparedness. The task force will develop legislative solutions to implement the recommendations made by the NYS 2100 Commission, the NYS Respond Commission and the NYS Ready Commission.

Task force members play pivotal roles in developing the short- and long-term plans that will help communities get back on their feet following Hurricane Sandy. Each task force member represents one of New York State's hardest hit areas and is thus uniquely qualified to pinpoint those neighborhoods and businesses that are most in need.

Senator Jeffrey Klein said, "Rebuilding the New York City Metro Area is one of the biggest challenges we're facing as a state. Not only is the devastation so intense, it is spread across a huge area, with unique problems in every neighborhood. That's why it's been so important for our task force to have days like today, where we tour different regions, bring in the stakeholders, and try to find solutions to some of the biggest problems New Yorkers are dealing with. I'm pleased that federal money is finally on its way to our state. But now it's up to us, as legislators, to listen to our constituents so we can determine how to best spend those dollars."

Task Force Co-Chair Senator Andrew Lanza said, "Now that we've seen first-hand the hardest hit areas across New York and heard about the obstacles that residents have had to overcome, we will work to develop short-term and long-term plans to help our communities get back on their feet as quickly as possible. As we take on the monumental task of rebuilding we will do what it takes to assist our neighbors, come back better and stronger, and improve New York's preparedness and response to future storms."

Task Force Co-Chair Senator Malcolm A. Smith said, "As the days, weeks and months continue following Superstorm Sandy, hundreds of New Yorkers are still in need of assistance. It is our duty as public officials to ensure that businesses and homeowners are able to rebuild and repair and that our state's infrastructure is once again able to flourish. As co-chair of the NYS Senate Bipartisan Task Force on Sandy Recovery I plan to do exactly that. I, along with members of the task force, will make sure that every dollar is dispersed where it is needed most."

Senator Marty Golden said, "Communities in my district have faced serious life altering hardships since Superstorm Sandy. I want to commend the response of both emergency services and volunteers, as their quick thinking has saved lives. We must do more to ensure that these communities are not left out in the cold, as the biggest issues many face are insurance settlements. Victims have thousands of dollars in rebuilding expenses with no relief in sight. I stand committed to ensuring that people who pay for insurance should receive benefits when they need them. My colleagues and I in the New York State Senate are committed to the rebuilding effort for a smarter, safer New York."

Senator Diane Savino said, "We are still feeling the devastation of Sandy in Staten Island and Brooklyn, and I think it is extremely important that we review how this happened in order to prevent

destruction and damage of this magnitude from happening again. Our goals should be to help and comfort people who have suffered tremendous losses in the storm, and to rebuild in such a way that it is unlikely this occurs again. I thank the fellow members of the task force for coming to Staten Island and Brooklyn to see the damage and suffering first-hand and look forward to working with them to reach these goals.”

Senator Jack Martins said, “We remain committed to rebuilding our communities from the devastating effects of Superstorm Sandy. As we continue our efforts in the areas most affected, we will focus on ensuring that our state has what it needs legislatively to fix what was destroyed and is better prepared for the next one.”

The task force consists of Co-Chair Senator Andrew Lanza (R,I,C-Staten Island), Co-Chair Senator Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens), Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), Senator Charles J. Fuschillo Jr. (R-Merrick), Senator-Elect James Sanders, Jr. (D-Queens), Senator Jack Martins (R-Mineola), Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland), Senator Martin J. Golden (R-Brooklyn), Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr. (D-Queens), Senator Lee Zeldin (R,C,I-Shirley), and Senator Phil Boyle (R,C,I-Suffolk County).

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