ENGAGING YOUR GOVERNMENT:

Resources and Advocacy for Your Community

Dear Neighbor,

This newsletter will focus on providing a range of ways for you to engage your government, whether to access benefits, advocate for change in your local community, or become involved in organizations pushing for policy changes at the city or state level. My office finds many of the resources below useful in helping constituents with problems, building coalitions to fight for change, and getting information about community issues.

Liz

Internet Resources

Benefits Screening
access.nyc.gov
Find help in NYC with food, money, housing, work and more on ACCESS NYC, a free benefits screening tool offered by New York City. There are over 30 programs you or your family may be eligible for regardless of immigration status even if you're already receiving benefits or have a job. Once you've identified programs you qualify for, you can also use this online tool to apply for benefits.

NYCityMap
maps.nyc.gov
This is a great visual resource to learn about what is going on in your neighborhood. It includes information on service providers, school district and other municipal boundaries, transportation, and arts and recreational facilities. It also provides detailed property information for every property in the city.

311 Map
www1.nyc.gov/apps/311srmap
Learn what issues your neighbors are concerned about by viewing all open and recently closed 311 service requests in your neighborhood.

Street Conditions Map
www.nycdot.info
View most recent street assessment ratings, every street sign in the city, capital projects, etc.

Tax Forms
Forms for 2017 taxes should be online by mid-January 2018.

State Taxes:
www.tax.ny.gov/forms/income_cur_forms.htm

Federal Taxes:
www.irs.gov/forms-instructions

MTA "Self Service"
Website - http://web.mta.info/selfserve/
Submit a comment or complaint, file a broken or lost MetroCard claim, sign up for customizable email or text alerts for subway service or elevator status, etc.

311 Website
www1.nyc.gov/311/index.page
My staff often find the 311 website a more effective tool than calling 311, because it allows you to search through specific complaint types rather than relying on operators to properly direct your call.

If you have a smartphone, there is also a **311 app** you can download to allow you to file complaints directly from your phone.

If you don't use the internet or prefer to call 311, see below for some tips on getting the best response from 311.

Making 311 Work for You

311 can be a great way to get information and responses to issues in your community or your building, but unfortunately it doesn't always work as advertised. Using the website listed above can sometimes be a better option. There is also a mobile phone app available. However, if you don't have internet access, or prefer to call, here are some tips for getting the best response:

Before You Call 311:

- Compile a list of details supporting your claim. Your report should be as specific as possible and should include: dates, times, locations, and names (if possible). For example, if you believe an "illegal hotel" is operating in your building, then you should have the address, apartment number(s) in question, and the dates/times you have seen people coming in/out.
- Before you call, make an outline of what you want to say. This will help ensure you do not leave out any details or stray off message. A clear, concise complaint has the greatest chance of being addressed quickly.
- Use keywords to describe your problem. For example, if apartments are being rented out for 30 days or less, it is considered an "illegal hotel." Or, if you are concerned about your

building's improper trash disposal then refer to it as a "trash problem" and/or a "rodent problem."

While on the phone with 311, get the following information:

- The Service Request Number for the report you've just made. Each report is given a Service Request Number which will allow you to track the status of the report in the future.
- The agency your report is being sent to. It will make it much easier to follow up with your claim if you know which agency is working on it.
- The name of the 311 representative you speak to and the date/time you called.

After you have filed your report:

- Check the status of your report by using your Service Request Number. You can do this over the phone, via the website, or on the mobile phone app.
- **If your claim is not being addressed, contact my office for further assistance.** If you have not received any status updates within a reasonable timeframe, we can follow up on your claim. However, in order to do so we will need your Service Request Number. To contact a member of my staff, please call: 212-490-9535.

Community Boards

Another key resource for community members trying to get local issues addressed are the Community Boards. Community Boards are local organizations each composed of 50 volunteer members and are the most local form of government in New York City. The boards' responsibilities include monitoring the delivery of city services such as sanitation and street maintenance; planning and reviewing land use applications, including zoning changes; and making recommendations for each year's city budget. Community boards consider a wide range of issues, including distribution of liquor licenses, sidewalk café applications, and permits for street fairs and other outdoor events.

There are four Community Boards that overlap my Senate District:

Community Board 2
(below 14th Street)
www.nyc.gov/html/mancb2/html/home/home.shtml
212-979-2272

Community Board 5
(14th Street to 59th Street West of Lexington/Park/Madison depending on block)
www.cb5.org/cb5
212-465-0907

Community Board 6
(14th Street to 59th Street East of Lexington/Park/Madison depending on block)
cbsix.org
212-319-3750

Community Board 8
(East 59th Street to East 96th Street)
www.cb8m.com
212-758-4340

Interested in joining your Community Board?

The Manhattan Borough President appoints members of the board, at least half on the recommendation of the local Councilmembers.

You can apply by visiting manhattanbp.nyc.gov/html/community-boards/community-boards.shtml

or contacting her office at 212-669-8300

Advocacy Groups

There are a wide range of groups that can provide support for constituents dealing with personal or community issues, or advocating for changes to state or local policy. Below is a far from comprehensive list of some of the key organizations our office works with, including a list of legal services providers.

EDUCATION

Advocates for Children
www.advocatesforchildren.org
212-947-9779

Alliance for Quality Education
www.aqeny.org
212-992-9751

Community Education Council, District 2
www.cecd2.net/
212-356-3915

Inside Schools
www.insideschools.org

ENVIRONMENT

350.NYC
world.350.org/nyc

Environmental Advocates of New York
www.eany.org
518-462-5526

Sierra Club of New York City
nyc.sierraclub.org/

HEALTHCARE

Healthcare for All New York
hcfany.org
212-614-5541

Assistance Selecting a Healthcare Plan: Community Service Society Navigator Network
www.cssny.org/programs/entry/community-service-society-navigator-network
888-614-5400

Assistance with Healthcare Options for Older Adults: Health Insurance Information, Counselling and Assistance Program (HIICAP)
www.aging.ny.gov/healthbenefits
212-602-4180

Medicare Rights Center
www.medicarerights.org
Hotline: 800-333-4114

Assistance with Medicaid: Community Healthcare Advocates
www.communityhealthadvocates.org
888-614-5400

HOUSING

Housing Court Answers
www.housingcourtanswers.org
212-962-4795

Housing Rights Initiative
www.housingrightsny.org
646-699-8980

Met Council on Housing
metcouncilonhousing.org
212-979-0611

Tenants & Neighbors
www.tandn.org
212-608-4320

IMMIGRATION

New York Immigration Coalition
www.thenyic.org/find-help
212-627-2227

LAND USE

Municipal Arts Society
Citywide
www.mas.org
212-935-3960

CIVITAS
Upper East Side
civitasnyc.org/live
212-996-0745

Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts
www.friends-ues.org
212-535-2526

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

(note that most of these have income-based eligibility restrictions)

City Bar Justice Center
www.citybarjusticecenter.org/legal-hotline
212-626-7383

Legal Aid Society
www.legal-aid.org/en/home.aspx
212-577-3300

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
www.lenoxhill.org/legaladvocacy
212-218-0503

Manhattan Legal Services
www.legalservicesnyc.org
646-442-3100

Mobilization for Justice (formerly MFY Legal Services)
mobilizationforjustice.org
212-417-3700

New York City Bar Legal Referral Service
www.nycbar.org/get-legal-help
917-688-4365

New York Legal Assistance Group
www.nylag.org
212-613-5000

OLDER ADULTS

My office puts together a comprehensive Senior Resource Guide, which is available at **www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/articles/liz-krueger/sen-kruegers-senior-resource-guide-2017-2018**
You can also call my office at 212-490-9535 if you would like a copy mailed to you.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Center for Independence of the Disabled of New York (CIDNY)
www.cidny.org
212-254-5000

TRANSPORTATION

Riders Alliance
www.ridersny.org
212-590-9427
Transportation Alternatives
www.transalt.org/
212-629-8080

Forum on Access-a-Ride

Thursday, December 14th, 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

Mt. Sinai Downtown, 10 Union Square East between 14th and 15th Streets

To RSVP call 212-490-9535 or email lkrueger@nysenate.gov

Paid Family Leave and Minimum Wage Increase

Starting January 1, 2018, most private sector workers, both men and women, will be able to take up to 8 weeks of **job-protected paid leave** to bond with a new child, care for a seriously ill family member, or address needs related to a family member's military deployment. You don't have to use your earned vacation or sick time before you can take paid family leave. Most employees will receive pay equal to 50% of their average earnings this first year. But you do need to give your employer advance notice, if possible.

The program is paid for through small weekly deductions from employee paychecks (0.126% per week payroll deduction from employees up to a maximum of $1.65 per week for those with higher incomes.) The insurance program pays you while you're out on leave, not your employer, and your health insurance continues with the same arrangement you've had with your employer. In 2021, when the program has been fully phased in, workers will be able to take up to 12 weeks of leave at 2/3rds of their own wage up to a statewide cap.

I am excited that this benefit is now available to New York Families. Paid family leave has been shown to increase employee morale, job satisfaction and loyalty. It has contributed to greater pay equity for women and increased involvement of men in family caregiving responsibilities. And it will help small businesses compete for employees on a more even playing field with larger businesses, and provide both employees and employers with a clear mechanism and financial cushion to handle the inevitable circumstances of pregnancy, birth, adoption, and family illness.

For more information about the new state program, visit the Paid Family Leave website at www.ny.gov/paidfamilyleave or call the state Paid Family Leave helpline at (844) 337-6303 with any questions.

You can also visit www.FamilyLeaveWorks.org to access information for LGBTQ parents, adoptive and foster parents, military families, and other moms, dads, and caregivers.

The 2016-17 State Budget included language enacting a series of **increases in the minimum wage** that will eventually bring the wage to $15.00 for most workers, though at different rates depending on the size of the employer and where they are located. For New York City, on 12/31/2017 the minimum wage will increase to $13.00 for employers with more than 10 employees and $12.00 for employers with 10 or fewer employees. For fast food workers, the wage will increase to $13.50 due to a state wage board ruling that predated the budget legislation.

For tipped workers, the minimum wage will increase to $8.65 for employers with more than 10 employees and $8.00 for employers with 10 or fewer employees. I cosponsor legislation (S4405A) to establish one fair minimum wage that includes all workers, regardless of classification or location.

For additional information or if you want to file a complaint regarding a wage violation, please call: 1-888-4-NYSDOL (1-888-469-7365).

New York State Senate, Albany, NY 12247

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NEW YORK SENATE

State Senator Liz Krueger's
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Albany Office:
808 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2297

District Office:
211 East 43rd Street
Suite 1201
New York NY 10017
(212) 490-9535

E-Mail: lkrueger@nysenate.gov
Website: lizkrueger.nysenate.gov