

News from STATE SENATOR **Liz Krueger**

New York State Senate - 26th District



COMMUNITY BULLETIN

June 2011

Message from Liz . . .

As the end of session approaches, movement toward resolution on key issues facing our state remains excruciatingly slow. Last month I talked about two of those issues – rent law renewal and marriage equality – and I will devote this message to yet another outstanding issue - ethics reform. Since the beginning of session, Governor Cuomo has been trumpeting this issue, and as more of my colleagues - and former colleagues - are indicted, convicted or sentenced, the need for stronger laws only grows clearer.

That said, I don't believe that better laws in and of themselves will ensure an end to malfeasance on the part of public officials. While most elected officials are driven by their commitment to public service, there always seems to be a few individuals who view, and take, their position in office as an opportunity for personal enrichment. But with stronger ethics laws we can make it easier to identify potential conflicts of interest and provide adequate enforcement mechanisms to discourage bad behavior, while also punishing those who continue to abuse their power.

Earlier this month, a deal was announced that will go a long way to addressing the most critical issues of ethics reform, and hopefully by the time you are reading this, ethics legislation will have passed and been signed into law. Among the key provisions of the proposed legislation are:

- Strong disclosure requirements for elected officials' outside income, including disclosure by the official and his/her firm's outside clients and customers doing business with, receiving grants or contracts from, seeking legislation or resolutions from, or involved in cases or proceedings before the State as well as such clients brought to the firm by the public official. Lobbyists will also be required to disclose any business relationships with elected officials of \$1,000 or more.
- Creation of a new database comprised of any individual or firm that appears in a representative capacity before any state governmental entity.

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- Creation of The Joint Commission on Public Ethics, which will have jurisdiction over all elected state officials and their employees, both in the executive and legislative branches, as well as lobbyists. The new Commission will have 14 members with appointments split between the Governor and the legislature, where appointments must be equally distributed between Republicans and Democrats. No one who has been a lobbyist, legislator or statewide office-holder during the previous 3 years will be eligible to serve. This new Commission replaces both the Commission on Public Integrity and the Legislative Ethics Commission, which is made up of both legislators and appointees. The inherent problem with the previous model is that members of each committee are beholden to the very house that they are meant to monitor. So, by creating one investigative body, that is comprised of appointees from both branches, it ensures the entity is not dependent on any one appointing authority.
- A ban on pension benefits for any public official convicted of a crime associated with his/her duties, a problem I have long carried legislation to address. It is both outrageous and illogical that taxpayer dollars are used to pay those who have violated the public trust.
- Increased Penalties for Violations of Campaign Finance and Ethics Laws. The Act substantially increases penalties for violations of the filing requirements and contribution limits in the Election Law, and increases penalties for violations of the State's code of Ethics that prohibits conflicts of interest.

While there has been significant resistance at various points to inclusion of these items, the fact that it now appears this significant legislation will pass suggests that Governor Cuomo's threat to appoint a Moreland Commission to investigate the legislature worked in bringing all parties to the table. This is a real opportunity for meaningful reform and I am hopeful that passage of this legislation will be an important step both to cleaning up Albany and to restoring faith in the New York State government.

Community Spotlight

Your Voice, Your Choice!

*A Discussion of Treatment Options
for Chronic Illness and End-of-Life Care*

Featuring

Dr. Diane Meier, Director, Center for Palliative Care
Mount Sinai Medical Center

Dr. Bernard Lee, Associate Chief Medical Officer
MJHS Hospice
And other speakers

Tuesday, June 28th, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

@ Lighthouse International

111 East 59th Street (b/t Lexington and Park)

*For more information, contact
Alice Fisher at alicefisher@gmail.com or 212-490-9535
No RSVP necessary*

Update on Proposed Marine Transfer Station at East 91st Street:

I was deeply disappointed that the New York City Department of Sanitation has revised its Capital Budget request to include funding for the proposed Marine Transfer Station at East 91st Street. I submitted testimony last month to the City Council strongly urging them to reject this capital funding request for the 91st Street Marine Transfer Station.

A Marine Transfer Station located at 91st Street will have very serious deleterious effects on area parks, traffic, odor, noise, air quality and public health. The residential neighborhood that surrounds the proposed site includes numerous public parks and a major recreational facility, as well as one of Manhattan's largest public housing complexes. The site is just 100 feet from the closest residence, and less than 280 feet from the Stanley Isaacs/Holmes Houses New York City Housing Authority complex which is home to more than 2,200 residents. More than 1,400 children live within 5 blocks of the site. According to census data from 2000, 13,500 people live within a quarter mile radius of the proposed site, including 1,850 children, 1,622 senior citizens and more than 1,500 people living below the poverty line. For comparison purposes—the next most populated community in which the City proposes to locate a Marine Transfer Station, Hamilton Avenue in Brooklyn, has less than 1/3 the number of people (4,300 people) living within a quarter of a mile radius of that site. Additionally, and disturbingly, 91st Street is the only proposed Marine Transfer Station site not separated from nearby residences by a commercial buffer zone.

The proposed 91st Street site is also surrounded by three city parks—Asphalt Green to the west, Carl Schurz Park to the south and Bobby Wagner Walk to the north. Before the former 91st Street Marine Transfer Station was closed in 1999 (which was less than half the size of the one currently proposed), the trucks would line-up all the way to 86th Street and beyond, and the surrounding neighborhood suffered greatly from odors, vermin and other pollutants. There is no question that the noise, noxious fumes and pollutants from the Marine Transfer Station, as well as the exhaust from the hundreds of trucks that will line up to enter the Marine Transfer Station each day, will dramatically affect the health and safety of the surrounding residents and community facilities. I will continue to work with our local Councilmembers, other elected officials and community advocates to fight this ill advised and dangerous plan.

Upcoming Rent Regulation Related Events:

- **Real Rent Reform Action on June 9:**
The Real Rent Reform Campaign is tentatively planning a major action in New York City on Thursday, June 9 to demand that the state legislature renew and strengthen the rent laws before they sunset on June 15. For more information about this action, email Mary Tek at mtek@tandn.org.
- **Rent Guidelines Board Public Hearings on June 16 and June 20:** Come and testify about the need to keep rents affordable at one of the New York City Rent Guidelines Board public hearings. The first is scheduled for June 16 at 4:30 p.m. at 285 Jay Street in Brooklyn, and the second is scheduled for June 20 at 10:00 a.m. at 7 East 7th Street. Pre-registration of speakers is now being accepted and is advised. Those who wish to pre-register for the June 16 hearing should call 212-385-2934 by

1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 15. Those who wish to pre-register for the June 20 hearing in Manhattan should call 212-385-2934 by 1:00 p.m. on Friday, June 17, 2011. An exact time for speaking cannot be provided, but those pre-registering will be informed of their number on the list of pre-registered speakers when they call the above listed phone number. If you are a Tenants & Neighbors member and plan to testify, please contact Jessie Levine at 212-608-4320 ext. 306 to let her know that you will be testifying and to review their proposed talking points.

- **Rent Guidelines Rally and Final Vote on June 27:**

The final vote of the Rent Guidelines Board, at which they will determine what the rent adjustments will be for the city's rent stabilized apartments, will be on June 27 at 5:30 p.m. at the Great Hall at Cooper Union, 7 East 7th Street. At 4:30 p.m., immediately before the vote, join Tenants & Neighbors for a rally outside the Cooper Union demanding that rents be kept affordable. If you plan to attend, email Jessie Levine at jlevine@tandn.org.

Community Seminar on Tenant Harassment

The New York State Courts Access to Justice Program is hosting a free seminar this month on Tenant Harassment. Mr. Sateesh Nori Esq., Director of Housing Litigation at Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services will be the guest speaker. The seminar will cover the Tenant Protection Act, the penalties associated with tenant harassment cases, and the safeguards provided for landlords against tenant who file frivolous lawsuits and much more!

Manhattan Locations:

Wednesday, June 22, 2011 (1:00-2:00PM):

New York Civil Court (LIVE)

111 Centre Street., Room 107, New York, NY 10013

Thursday, June 23, 2011 (1:00-2:00PM)

Harlem Community Justice Center (VIDEO CONFERENCE)

170 East 121st Street, Room 308, New York, NY 10035

Community Forum on the Impact of Medicaid Redesign:

I am cosponsoring a forum organized by Community Board 6 on the Impact of Medicaid Redesign. The focus of this forum is centered around two critical areas: Home Based Care and changes affecting the disabled. There will be a focus on both the positive and negative impacts on our residents, as well as their families and care givers, who are dependent on Medicaid services. The forum is scheduled for Thursday, June 30, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the NYU Langone Medical Center, 550 First Avenue. The panel will include Senator Tom Duane; Assembly Member Richard Gottfried; Ann M. Frisch, RN, MBA, Executive Director, Health & Home Care, HHC; and a representative from the Center for the Independence of the Disabled. It will be moderated by Meryl Weinberg, Executive Director of Metropolitan Hospital, HHC.

New York City Prescription Drug Discount Card:

New York City is now offering a new card that lets people buy prescription drugs at big discounts. Residents, tourists, commuters, and people who already have insurance, are all eligible for the new and free BigAppleRx cards, regardless of age, income, or citizenship. Discounts are expected to average 47 percent. Patients with diabetes could save as much

as \$831 a year on generic medicines while asthma sufferers could save \$667 on inhaler drugs. About 2,000 drugstores in New York City — 85% of the total — will accept the card. To obtain a card or for more information, visit www.bigapplerx.com or obtained by calling 311.

Free Travel Training for Access-a-Ride Customers:

The Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State and MTA New York City Transit are offering a free travel training program for qualified Access-A-Ride Customers. Through personalized one-on-one instruction, trainees will learn to travel independently on one round trip bus or subway route to a destination of their choice in New York City. Travel Training can enable people with disabilities to safely and confidently travel by bus or subway in New York City's five boroughs as well as allowing greater flexibility in making and changing travel plans. Access-A-Ride customers 18 years and older may apply. To apply or for more information Call 212-947-5770 ext. 627 or Email traveltraining@cpofnys.org.

Join the Parks Greeter Corps:

The newly launched Parks Greeter Corps is a team of motivated volunteers who are ambassadors of New York's park system in the community. Park greeters are a welcoming presence at the entrance to parks and playgrounds, inform patrons of the available amenities and programs, gauge the public's opinion and interests and serve as eyes and ears for the park's condition and environment. The NYC Parks Department is looking for volunteers from all backgrounds in all five boroughs. If you are interested in volunteering as a greeter for Parks or would like more information, visit nyc.gov/parks/greetercorps or contact Mahanth Joishy at Mahanth.joishy@parks.nyc.gov or (212) 360-8287.

Policy Spotlight

Bi-Partisan Pro-Choice Legislative Caucus

In a year that has seen Women's Reproductive Rights come under attack at the National and State levels, I have joined 74 other members of the New York State Legislature in creating a Bipartisan Pro Choice Legislative Caucus (BPCLC), to coordinate efforts to ensure that such attacks will never gain traction in New York State. On May 9th, the BPCLC held their first public event, joining with pro choice advocates and health providers throughout the State to host the Reproductive Rights and Information Fair, an event highlighting the BPCLC's desire to shed more light on complex issues surrounding reproductive rights.

By providing this opportunity to collect factual materials, ask questions and discuss concerns about topics surrounding reproductive rights, the BPCLC, and co-sponsoring organizations, hope to diminish the impact of misinformation that often surround these complex issues.

Among the topics the Caucus is focusing on are passage of the Reproductive Health Act, access to abortion care, adolescent health care and comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health issues for immigrant communities. After an anti-choice Assemblymember introduced legislation to defund Planned Parenthood and other

reproductive health providers in New York State, the Caucus responded denouncing the move. Earlier this month, the sponsor of the bill pulled it off of the Assembly Health Committee agenda in the face of strong opposition.

We have seen, across the country, a systematic attempt to strip women of basic access to reproductive rights in Congress and State Capitols. The Bipartisan Pro Choice Legislative Caucus will work to ensure that New York not only stops any attempt to hamper women's reproductive rights in our State, but stays a national leader in promoting and protecting a women's right to choose.

District Office: 211 East 43rd Street, Suite 401, New York NY 10017 (212) 490-9535 Fax: (212) 490-2151
Albany Office: Legislative Office Building, Rm 617, Albany NY 12247 (518) 455-2297 Fax: (518) 426-6874
Email: liz@lizkrueger.com; On the Web at <http://www.lizkrueger.com>