



Assemblyman

MICHAEL SIMANOWITZ

Reports to the people

Fall/Winter 2013

ATTENTION: PROPERTY OWNERS WHO RECEIVE BASIC STAR

The NYS Department of Taxation & Finance now requires all Basic STAR recipients to register their exemption with the State. Failure to register by December 31st, 2013 will result in the loss of your exemption.

There are three ways to register your Basic STAR exemption. You can do it online at www.tax.ny.gov and click the "Register for STAR" icon. You may also call the NYS Department of Taxation & Finance at 518-457-2036. You can also schedule an appointment at our district office and we will register your exemption for you. We are available Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at 718-969-1508.

Please note that in order to successfully register your household, the State requires the names and social security numbers of all owners. Please make sure you have this information when you come to our office or registering on your own.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU!

Our office can help you with a variety of applications including the **NYC Department of Finance Exemption Application for Homeowners** (covering Basic STAR, Enhanced STAR, Senior Citizen, Disabled and Veterans Exemptions), **Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption**, **Disabled Rent Increase Exemption**, **Reduced-Fare Metrocard**, **Access-a-Ride**, and the **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)**. Please note these programs each have specific eligibility requirements and that cooperators within Electchester Housing only qualify for Basic or Enhanced STAR, SCRIE or DRIE at this time. We also provide notary services free of charge. Call **718-969-1508** to find out more!

SALES TAX EXEMPTION ON WATER & SEWER LINE PROTECTION PROGRAMS

A bill introduced by Assemblyman Simanowitz which protects property owners from being assessed sales tax on water and sewer line protection programs has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo (Chapter 400 of 2013).

The annual cost of owning and maintaining a home is already a costly undertaking. In New York State, insurance does not include sales tax, and the protection plan serves the same purpose as an insurance plan. Homeowners should not be subject to unnecessary taxes on their water and sewer line protection programs and this law will ensure exemption from the burden of excessive fees.

"A water line break in New York City can cost a property owner anywhere between \$3,000 to \$5,000," said Assemblyman Simanowitz. "A sewer line break costs between \$10,000 and \$15,000. We are fortunate that the City offers such a program to its citizens and such a debilitating expense can be avoided. However, since this program is not technically labeled "insurance" it was not exempt from sales tax. My legislation has corrected this oversight and property owners who are enrolled will no longer incur this added fee on their bills. I want to thank Governor Cuomo for signing this important piece of legislation and protecting property owners from this needless expense."

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has partnered with American Water Resources (AWR) to offer the Water & Sewer Line Protection Plan. Please note that participation is voluntary. If you are interested in enrolling, please contact AWR at 1-888-300-3570.



Voter Registration at Council Towers VI

Assemblyman Simanowitz and his staff assist residents of Council Towers VI, a senior housing complex in Flushing to register to vote.



Holocaust Resource Center honors former Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn

Assemblyman Simanowitz is joined by Senator Toby Stavisky in honoring former Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn for her work with the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center & Archives at Queensborough Community College.

LEANDRA'S LAW NOW INCLUDES MANDATORY IGNITION INTERLOCK REQUIREMENTS

Assemblyman Simanowitz announced the passage of legislation that strengthens Leandra's Law by including mandatory ignition interlocks on vehicles of motorists who were caught driving while under the influence (Chapter 169 of 2013). Ignition interlocks are breath test devices that prevent cars from starting if the driver is intoxicated.

The bill would require a person found driving a vehicle with a conditional license while drunk or impaired would be charged with first degree aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, a class E felony. The measure also clarifies that young offenders would be subject to interlock requirements. All offenders would be subject to these requirements for a minimum of 12 months initially, with a reduction to six months after the offender submitted proof that he or she installed and maintained the ignition interlock device for at least six months.

"While I have consistently fought for laws to keep drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel, we must keep looking for ways to strengthen our current DWI laws and protect families from senseless tragedies," said Assemblyman Simanowitz. "Drunk driving can ruin or end someone's life in the blink of an eye. By tightening up Leandra's Law, we can stop more convicted drunk drivers from making reckless decisions behind the wheel that put innocent lives in danger."

Additionally, under Leandra's Law, individuals convicted of driving under the influence are barred from driving a vehicle unless it is equipped with an ignition interlock device, which prevents a car from starting if alcohol has been ingested by the driver. This restriction is recorded on the driver's DMV record, and it is deemed a criminal offense to drive without the mandatory interlock.

National Night Out Against Crime



Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz is proud to salute the brave men and women of the New York City Police Department and the dedicated efforts of the Precinct Community Councils during National Night Out Against Crime. Their combined efforts help keep our neighborhoods safe.

Above are pictures from (top) the 102 Precinct Community Council, (center) the 107 Precinct Community Council, and (bottom) the 112 Precinct National Night Out events.



Security Cameras for Briarwood

Assemblyman Simanowitz with Councilman James Gennaro, Sey Schwartz, President of the Briarwood Community Association and area residents announcing the placement of two NYPD security cameras at strategic locations in the neighborhood.

"The importance of placing security cameras cannot be understated," said Simanowitz. "The law enforcement community needs every tool at their disposal to stay one step ahead of criminals and terrorists to keep our neighborhoods safe. Those who would do harm to our citizens will think twice about engaging in illegal activity when the cameras are installed."



Kew Gardens Hills Library Renovation & Expansion

Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz is joined by Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, Congresswoman Grace Meng, State Senator Toby Stavisky, State Senator Joseph Addabbo, Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer, and Queens Library Executive Director Tom Galante for the ceremonial ground-breaking of the renovation and expansion of the Kew Gardens Hills Library Branch expected to be completed in 2015.

GREATER PROTECTIONS ENACTED FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND CHILD ABUSE

Once a criminal case is closed, crime victims still face a life heavily altered by that crime; often with peace of mind hard to find. That's why two pieces of recent legislation signed into law, co-sponsored by Assemblyman Simanowitz, are essential for protecting crime victims and their families.

The first such measure is limiting the parental rights of sex offenders who conceived children through sexual assault (Chapter 371 of 2013). Prior law did not restrict custody and visitation rights when the birth of a child was the result of the assault, except in some circumstances involving first-degree rape with forcible compulsion. As a result, sex offenders were allowed to seek court-ordered visitation and custody in the same manner as traditional parents—and sometimes did so in an attempt to intimidate victims and deter them from cooperating with prosecutors. This legislation corrects that by presuming that it is not in the best interest of the child to grant the offender visitation rights or custody. It also denies the offender the

right to receive notice of adoption proceedings and notice of social services like foster care, guardianship and custody.

Secondly, legislation increasing penalties on repeat child abusers is now law (Chapter 172 of 2013). Under this measure, the window for charging an adult with aggravated assault upon a person less than 11 years old will be extended from 3 years to 10 years. Aggravated assault is a class E felony which carries a maximum sentence of four years in prison.

"These new provisions are essential in amending the language of our statutes to further protect the victims of such heinous acts," said Assemblyman Simanowitz. "Taking swift action to provide these safeguards is not just responsible policy. We must speak for those who suffer silently among such tragic and horrific circumstances to ensure that they can live with dignity and respect. Our message is clear, if you engage in a criminal offense that is sexually motivated or harmful to children in New York State, you will face the consequences."



Pomonok Parking Protest Rally

Assemblyman Simanowitz is joined by Congresswoman Grace Meng, Senator Toby Stavisky, and other tenant leaders to protest the poor implementation of a new residential parking system within Pomonok Houses. The plan raised residents' rates while providing poorer customer service. Our office along with Senator Stavisky and Congresswoman Meng worked with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and its contractor Greystone to fix many of the problems plaguing Pomonok tenants who parked in NYCHA lots.

EXTENDING PROPERTY TAX RELIEF TO NYC CONDO & CO-OP OWNERS

Assemblyman Simanowitz announced passage of sweeping legislation that extends and expands New York City's Condominium and Cooperative real property tax abatement program as part of a comprehensive package of affordable housing reforms. The bill was signed into law on February 1st.

The value of the tax abatement will be phased in over three years based on the assessment of the unit. Condos and co-ops with assessed values of \$60,000 or less (roughly \$600,000 in market value) would see an increase in the percentage of the abatement compared to 2011-2012 abatement amounts. Those assessed between \$15,000 and \$60,000 (\$150,000-\$600,000 in market value) would receive the greatest increase.

"Providing much needed relief to condo and co-op owners is one of my highest priorities as a legislator," said Assemblyman Simanowitz. "I am proud to say our legislation finally starts addressing the disproportionate tax burden this group is forced to endure."



Electchester Street Fair

Assemblyman Simanowitz is joined by Congresswoman Grace Meng and Carol Ann Foley for Electchester's annual Street Fair.



Waterside Estates at Cresthaven Family Fun Day

Assemblyman Simanowitz is joined by Senator Toby Stavisky, Borough President-elect Melinda Katz, Debra Markel, President of the Waterside Estates at Cresthaven Homeowners Association, and Councilman-elect Paul Vallone.

INFORMING NEIGHBORHOODS OF BROWNFIELD CLEANUPS THROUGH LOCAL COMMUNITY BOARDS

Legislation co-sponsored by Assemblyman Simanowitz and signed into law by the Governor would require the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to notify any community board in New York City of new brownfield site cleanups (Chapter 266 of 2013). A brownfield site is property that contains or potentially contains hazardous materials. Such materials include chemical waste and/or petroleum.

Current DEC regulations require a period of public comment for a brownfield cleanup request. Adjacent property owners, nearby schools, and local newspapers must also be notified.

The additional requirement of notifying local community boards within New York City would allow for notice of opportunity for public comment to be served to interested parties. Community

boards hold monthly meetings where they notify the public and local civic organizations of upcoming public hearings for state and city governmental agencies. A requirement to notify local community boards, in addition to other individuals already required to be notified, would also give notice to those residing in the vicinity of the brownfield an opportunity to comment on the planned cleanup.

“The effects of a brownfield cleanup can have long-lasting repercussions,” said Simanowitz. “It is vital that our community boards be informed and to give residents an additional voice in the process. We must never marginalize the authority of these bodies to analyze local issues and make recommendations. I commend Governor Cuomo on recognizing the roles our community boards play in shaping neighborhoods and signing this legislation into law.”



Taekwondo Afterschool Program Graduation

Assemblyman Simanowitz joins PS 201 Principal Rebecca Lozada, Parent Coordinator Pei Hsia Wang, instructors and students at Korea Taekwondo's white belt graduation ceremony. Korea Taekwondo offers after-school instruction in homework, tutoring, and Taekwondo through their “Reach-out” program to public school students.



College Point Civic & Taxpayers Association Meeting

Assemblyman Simanowitz speaks with constituents about legislation and community concerns at a recent gathering of the College Point Civic & Taxpayers Association.



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FUNDING RESTORED TO OPWDD PROGRAMS THAT HELP DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Assemblyman Simanowitz was proud to co-sponsor legislation which restores \$90 million to the budget of the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) (Chapter 349 of 2013).

The restoration was needed when the federal government demanded \$1.1 billion that they claim were overpayments made for services to the developmentally disabled. The state was able to negotiate a reduction to \$500 million and that the burden would be spread out so OPWDD providers would not have to carry it entirely. The FY 2013-2014 state budget made a \$30 million restoration

to the agency but still left a \$90 million shortfall. This legislation corrects that.

“The need for this funding is crucial as I know many families who struggle every day with caring for a developmentally disabled loved one,” said Assemblyman Simanowitz. “Now families who received care from the many programs under OPWDD’s umbrella will continue as normal. The cost of providing these services increases every year and I am thankful to the Governor for restoring this funding to OPWDD’s budget.”