



Dear Neighbor,

It has been an honor to represent you in the New York State Assembly for the past year and a half. Since the day I was elected, I have been a strong voice for our community in Albany and have supported initiatives to make government work for you.

During these tough economic times, New York State was forced to endure some deep and painful spending cuts, but I am proud to have worked to restore vital funding to our local schools, senior centers and health care programs. I was also pleased to support an increase in the minimum wage and a sales tax break on clothing, so that working men and women have more cash in their pockets to support their families and spend in our local stores and restaurants.

I have also worked tirelessly to make sure that western Queens remains a family-friendly, dynamic community where residents have access to quality health care and good schools, our air is clean and energy affordable, our seniors are cared for and small businesses thrive.

On a personal note, I was thrilled to announce that I am expecting a baby girl this summer, and I am so grateful to all of our neighbors who have expressed their warm wishes during this time.

It is a privilege to represent the community I have called home my entire life. I will continue to be a staunch advocate for you and your family in Albany, and I look forward to working with you to create a better and brighter future for all New Yorkers in the years to come. As always, my staff and I are available to help you and can be reached at (718) 545-3889.

Sincerely yours,

Aravella Simotas

New York State Assemblywoman

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARAVELLA SIMOTAS

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SIMOTAS FIGHTS FOR SENIORS AND THE DISABLED

Works to restore EPIC

Assemblywoman Simotas helped pass a restoration of co-payment assistance for Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) enrollees. EPIC assists low and moderate income seniors with medication costs that are not covered by Medicare.

“As prescription drug costs continue to rise, low-income seniors need assistance beyond what Medicare Part D provides,” Simotas said. “This restoration provides much-needed relief and will help thousands of seniors pay for vital medication.”

Strengthens rent protections for seniors and the disabled

The Assembly passed several measures sponsored by Assemblywoman Simotas to strengthen the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program and the Disabled Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program. Both programs offer eligible tenants an exemption from rent increases, and the owners of the apartments receive a credit against their real estate taxes.



“We must do all we can to help our seniors and neighbors with disabilities stay in the communities they love, and of which they are an integral part,” Simotas said. “Seniors and individuals with disabilities on fixed incomes often cannot afford rent increases. Strengthening programs like SCRIE and DRIE will help more New Yorkers afford to stay in their homes.”

SIMOTAS FIGHTS FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT



Named chair of Smart Power NY coalition

Assemblywoman Simotas was named chairwoman of Smart Power NY, a coalition of elected officials, community activists, environmental groups and business leaders formed to advocate for clear air initiatives in Astoria.

“Astoria has been environmentally assaulted for decades by traffic, the airports and most significantly, power plants,” Simotas said. Simotas’ coalition works to ensure access to safe and reliable power, reduce carbon emissions, create new jobs and help New Yorkers save on their power bills through repowering Astoria’s old, dirty power plants.

SUPPORTS COMPOSTING AT QUEENS LIBRARY

Bring your frozen food scraps to the Steinway branch of the Queens Public Library at 21-45 31 Street every Monday evening from 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. through November for composting.

“Composting is an important way of limiting our trash and growing our green spaces and gardens.”

SIMOTAS PUTS FAMILIES AND CHILDREN FIRST

Simotas leads fight to save Bryant High School

- Assemblywoman Simotas organized a rally attended by hundreds of students, teachers, parents and community leaders to support Bryant High School. “The Mayor’s plan to close my alma mater ignores the significant support that Bryant enjoys,” said Simotas. “We should all work together to find a solution that doesn’t unnecessarily disrupt the lives of the students, fire dedicated teachers and increase costs.”



Introduces New York Family Leave Act

Simotas introduced legislation to provide a total of 24 weeks of job-protected leave to new mothers. The bill ensures that any period of extended leave comes at no cost to businesses or taxpayers.

“As an expectant mother, I look forward to the exciting early weeks of my baby girl’s life knowing there are few things more important to her well-being than proper bonding and attachment at the early stages. All of New York’s hardworking families deserve to spend this time with their children.”

Honors essay contest participants at P.S. 127, reads aloud at P.S. 122

- Assemblywoman Simotas honored seventh grade students who participated in her annual Black History Month essay contest at P.S. 127 in East Elmhurst. Simotas spoke to the students about the importance of remembering the contributions of African Americans throughout our nation’s history.
- The Assemblywoman also visited P.S. 122 in Astoria to participate in the school’s annual “Read Aloud” program. Each year, local leaders, public officials, authors and community members share a favorite story with the students. “It was a pleasure to share stories with such bright young people,” said Simotas. “The importance of reading to our children cannot be understated. A love of reading can foster a lifetime of learning.”



Dream Big READ! Take the New York State Assembly Summer Reading Challenge!

Students who participate will receive the Assembly’s *Excellence in Reading Certificate*

For more information, log on to www.summerreadingnys.org, email simotasa@assembly.state.ny.us or call **718-545-3889**



SIMOTAS SUPPORTS SMALL BUSINESSES

Hosts seminar to help local restaurant owners

Assemblywoman Aravella Simotas hosted local restaurant owners and managers at a seminar explaining the ins and outs of the New York City Health Code. The event was widely attended by members of the local business community.

“As the daughter of small business owners, I understand that supporting these businesses is the key to the future economic success of our state,” Simotas said.

“Nothing is more important to small business owners without the resources to hire consultants and attorneys than transparency in the process.”

Speaks out against planned pharmacy industry merger

Simotas expressed strong opposition to a pending merger between two of the nation’s largest pharmacy benefit management companies, saying that it would threaten jobs and hurt New York’s small businesses and consumers.

“I believe it is the private sector – our state’s small businesses – that has the ability to lead our economy back to prosperity, and that policymakers ought to do everything in our power to aid businesses,” Simotas said. “But if these companies are allowed to merge, small businesses who provide health benefits to their employees will see their health care



Simotas rallies to protect small businesses and consumers.

costs increase, and that could lead to layoffs. Increasing costs on small businesses is the last thing Albany or Washington D.C. should allow in this, or any, economy.”

Assemblywoman Simotas has been vocal on the availability and affordability of prescription medications. She authored legislation which seeks to protect a worker’s right to choose their own pharmacist following a workers’ compensation claim.

SIMOTAS PROMOTES PUBLIC SAFETY

Simotas introduces bill to toughen rape law

Simotas shared the outrage of many New Yorkers following the Pena trial and immediately took action to prevent such a miscarriage of justice from happening again. The “Rape is Rape” bill redefines rape to include sexual intercourse, oral sexual conduct, anal sexual conduct and aggravated sexual contact.

“The importance of calling rape by its name cannot be understated,” Simotas said. “By denying this fact and by calling rape something different, society fails to validate the victim’s experience and trauma.”



Simotas addresses the Manhattan Borough President’s Domestic Violence Task Force about the Rape is Rape bill.

Helps safely dispose of prescription medication

In response to a request by Assemblywoman Simotas, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agreed to provide a location in western Queens for local residents to safely dispose of prescription medication and keep them away from our water supply and out of the hands of children.

Simotas works to keep prescription drugs out of the hands of addicts

Simotas has made promoting the responsible handling of prescription drugs a top priority. “After several conversations with small pharmacies in my community, it became clear to me that prohibiting electronic prescriptions for controlled substances actually makes it easier for addicts and dealers to illegally procure drugs like Oxycontin,” Simotas said. “By allowing e-prescriptions for controlled substances - a step I have called for both in a letter to the state Department of Health and through my sponsorship and passage of the I-STOP legislation - New York State will improve our ability to track these drugs and reduce the prevalence of prescription theft, forgery and error. This measure would add a layer of protection for small business owners while cracking down on addicts and those who enable them.”

“I applaud the DEA for taking steps to help families dispose of prescription drugs in a responsible way, and I am delighted that they have included our community in this helpful program,” Simotas said.