



Assemblymember
**ARAVELLA
SIMOTAS**
Spring 2013



Assemblymember Simotas re-introduces the Rape is Rape bill at an Albany press conference with rape survivor Lydia Cuomo and Andrew Willis from the Stop Abuse Campaign.

Simotas Works to Make Our Community Safe and Secure

Simotas Re-Introduces Rape is Rape Legislation

Assemblymember Simotas, together with rape survivor Lydia Cuomo, held a press conference in Albany announcing the re-introduction of her groundbreaking Rape is Rape legislation. Simotas's bill would redefine rape to include additional types of forced sexual activities and simplify the standard used to prosecute these heinous crimes. This will ensure that rapists can no longer escape facing the full consequences of their actions based on technicalities in our laws.

The Rape is Rape bill has received national attention, and an online petition is available at

<http://www.causes.com/RedefineRape> for supporters to sign. As of March 15, over 20,000 signatures had already been recorded in support of the bill. Addressing Ms. Cuomo's family and friends in the audience, Simotas said that "Lydia's courage in coming forward to shed light on this important issue is truly inspiring." Simotas concluded, "It's our obligation to respect survivors by ensuring that what any person would recognize as rape is unequivocally called rape by the law. With this bill, we can enact sensible legislation that makes it easier to punish the guilty and gives survivors a sense of justice."

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Simotas Supports Children and Families



Joining fellow women-elected officials from multiple levels of government, Assemblymember Simotas speaks at City Hall to support the New York City Paid Sick Leave Act.

Simotas Supports Working Mothers with Rally for NYC's Paid Sick Leave Act

Assemblymember Simotas joined several other elected officials on the steps of City Hall to express her support for the Paid Sick Time Act. "I am proud to offer my support for the Paid Sick Time Act. It is deplorable to think that a hard-working citizen who needs medical care would risk forgoing

necessary treatment out of a fear of losing their job or forfeiting essential income," Simotas said. "Women and young mothers would benefit most if paid sick time was provided to our workforce, and that is why it is essential that it becomes a reality this year."

Simotas Sponsors Legislation to Alleviate Student Loan Debt

In an effort to help alleviate the crushing burden of student loan debt many young New Yorkers face, Assemblymember Simotas introduced legislation which authorizes a personal income tax deduction for student loan payments. The bill would allow taxpayers to use up to \$5,000 per year in pre-tax dollars to repay student loans.

"As the costs of college tuition have far outpaced the rate of inflation, student loans have become increasingly necessary to access higher education," Simotas said. "Debilitating levels of student loan debt keep many New Yorkers out of the middle class and leave our college

graduates vulnerable in this difficult job market. This bill will fill a critical need in our state and help alleviate the burden student loan debt places on college graduates and their families."

Simotas Fights for Equal Pay

Assemblymember Simotas helped to pass a legislative package to eliminate wage discrimination in the workforce. This law makes it easier to enforce wage laws and create state policies establishing fixed salaries for each job. "Our state has historically set the standard for equality in this nation, and in the year 2013, it's simply unacceptable that many New Yorkers are not earning equal pay for equal work," Simotas said.

In Response to Sandy Hook Tragedy, Simotas Hails Passage of NY SAFE Act

Following the tragic massacre of 20 children and 6 teachers in Sandy Hook, Assemblymember Simotas was proud to vote for meaningful reform of New York's gun laws. "No parent should have to fear for their child's life when they send their children to school," said Simotas. "I am proud to have worked to enact nation-leading gun control legislation that makes all New Yorkers safer." The package of bills addresses the scourge of gun violence holistically through a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, comprehensive background checks, stricter penalties for the use of illegal firearms, and greater oversight of the mentally ill.

Simotas Supports the SAFE Housing Act

The Survivor's Accessing Fair and Equitable (SAFE) Housing Act creates a new, alternative application procedure for the New York City Housing Authority's N-1 Priority Housing Program for victims of domestic violence. This legislation will allow experts to dictate when emergency housing is necessary and help ensure that endangered survivors do not fall through the cracks on technicalities.

"The single best way to give meaningful, long-term help to the survivors of domestic violence and their families is to provide them with secure, permanent housing away from their abusers," Simotas said.



Assemblymember Simotas speaks out at a rally which successfully led to the shutdown of the Queen of Hearts “bikini bar.”

Simotas Rallies to Close Local Strip Joint

In response to community complaints, Assemblymember Simotas held a rally in January to protest the operation of Queen of Hearts, an establishment that permitted provocative pole dancing and offered lap dances to its patrons. The rally resulted in the successful shutdown of the adult venue, one which Simotas made clear does not belong in our community. “I’m pleased that the owner realized that an establishment that degrades women has no place in Astoria,” Simotas said. Recently, two such establishments have attempted to open in Astoria promising adult entertainment.

In order to prevent these and similar seedy businesses from obtaining licensure to operate, Simotas introduced the Community Full Disclosure Act (CFDA). The CFDA

closes the loophole that allows adult businesses to open with no input from the Community Board or community residents. “The community should be able to tell from an application what kind of business an applicant intends to conduct in our community,” Simotas said. “With these two recent openings, it is clear that without more detail in the application we are inviting unsuitable businesses into our family-oriented community. This is not what our community wants. It is not what we want to teach our children about the treatment of women and girls.” The CFDA passed the Assembly in March.

To report an establishment you feel is operating out of character with your neighborhood, please contact my office with the name, type of establishment, and nature of the problem.

Simotas Celebrates Community Accomplishments

Simotas Welcomes Human First to Astoria

Assemblymember Simotas attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for Human First, a center for children and youths with disabilities. Simotas was joined by Councilmember Peter Vallone, Jr. and Ed Babor from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney’s office.

“I share Human First’s commitment to providing quality care to the most vulnerable among us,” Simotas said. “Human First’s beautiful new facility and talented staff bring much needed services and resources to our community.”

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Assemblymember Simotas celebrates the opening of Astoria’s Human First center for children and youths with disabilities.

Upcoming Events

Greek Independence Day

Assemblymember Simotas, NYS Senator Michael Gianaris, and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall will be celebrating Greek Independence Day. Please join us on:

Friday, March 22, 2013

6:00 p.m.

**Hellenic Cultural Center
27-09 Crescent St., Astoria**

Annual Town Hall Meeting

Assemblymember Simotas will co-host a Town Hall Meeting with the United Community Civic Association. The panel will consist of agency commissioners and elected officials who will answer questions regarding issues in our community. All are welcome.

Thursday, April 4, 2013

6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

**Museum of the Moving Image
36-01 35th Avenue, Astoria**

To RSVP, please contact us at
718-545-3889 or
simotasa@assembly.state.ny.us

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Simotas Honors Community Leaders in Celebration of Women's History Month

Assemblymember Simotas and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney presented several local female role models with honors at an event titled "Celebrating the Women of Northwestern Queens." The three honorees included: NYC Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras, who received the Gloria D'Amico Award for Leadership in Politics, Gianna Cerbone, Owner and Chef of Manducatis Rustica Restaurant who received the Excellence in Small Business Award, and Evie Hantzopoulos, Executive Director of Global Kids and Member of Community Board 1, who received the Community Service Award.

"Here in Northwest Queens, we are lucky to have so many extraordinary women who work tirelessly on behalf of our community. These three exemplary women serve as role models to young women across the borough and I thank them for their contributions," Simotas said.



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