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Assemblymember  
**ARAVELLA  
SIMOTAS**  
*Reports to the Community*



**Fall 2013**

## A LETTER TO MY CONSTITUENTS:

*Dear Neighbor,*

*It is my pleasure to update you about the work I have been doing on behalf of our community as a member of the New York State Assembly. Since taking office as your Assemblywoman, I have worked tirelessly to be a staunch and vocal advocate for you in Albany.*

*The 2013 legislative session saw great achievements for the residents of our state and our community. Together with Governor Andrew Cuomo, we passed legislation that will boost our economy, create jobs, and cut taxes. We also fought for equal rights, successfully restored funding to protect our most vulnerable citizens, and raised the minimum wage. In addition, this year marked the state's third consecutive on-time budget, one which reflects a real commitment to education. Our communities are only as strong as our schools—that's why I fought to ensure that our schools receive the funding they need to provide a quality education to all of our students.*

*We also passed the most comprehensive gun safety law in the country in order to save lives, increased penalties for repeat child abusers, and assisted residents as they continue to rebuild from the devastating effects of Superstorm Sandy. There is, of course, much work still to be done and I will always remain committed to serving the hardworking families of Western Queens.*

*In addition, earlier this summer, my district office moved to its new home in the heart of Astoria. The new location is at 31-19 Newtown Avenue, Suite 401, near the 30th Avenue stop on the N and Q subway lines. I hope that our new location will allow you to become even more engaged with the community. Our office's role is to be a resource for you here in the district, and I encourage you to write, call, or visit if I can help you in any way.*

*Sincerely yours,*

Aravella Simotas

New York State Assemblywoman

## ASSEMBLYMEMBER ARAVELLA SIMOTAS

DISTRICT OFFICE: 31-19 Newtown Ave., Suite 401, Astoria, NY 11102 • 718-545-3889, FAX: 718-545-3607

ALBANY OFFICE: Room 652, LOB, Albany, NY 12248 • 518-455-5014, FAX: 518-455-4044

EMAIL: [simotasa@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:simotasa@assembly.state.ny.us)

## PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

### Simotas leads the fight to prevent adult establishments from opening in Astoria

- After an outpouring of community opposition to a proposed Astoria “bikini bar” that would offer patrons pole and lap dances by scantily-clad entertainers, Assemblymember Aravella Simotas spoke out on behalf of neighborhood residents at a hearing before the New York State Liquor Authority. Over 500 community members signed a petition circulated by Assemblymember Simotas to make it clear that a “bikini bar” was out of character with the neighborhood, would reduce property values, increase the need for law enforcement, and create urban blight. The State Liquor Authority ruled against granting a liquor license to its operators. This victory comes on the heels of Simotas’s successful effort to close a similar establishment that was operating two blocks away from a school for young girls.

### Simotas’s Community Full Disclosure Act is signed into law

- In light of this recent string of proposed adult establishments taking Astoria residents by surprise, Assemblymember Simotas authored the Community Full Disclosure Act. Assemblymember Simotas’s new law requires greater transparency and a stronger role for the community in the liquor licensing process.



*Assemblymember Simotas speaks out in support of her Community Full Disclosure Act during floor debate in the Assembly chamber.*

*“[Simotas’s new law] will end the days when bikini bars could offer lap dances, pole dances, or other exotic performances without alerting communities ahead of time.”*

*—NY Daily News, 8/3/13*

## KEEPING OUR SCHOOLS STRONG

### Simotas advocates for the expansion of gifted and talented programs in Astoria

- At the urging of Assemblymember Simotas, teachers, and parents, Gifted and Talented (G&T) programs for middle school students in Western Queens will be retained and expanded at several schools throughout Astoria, and a landmark new citywide gifted school (30Q300) will operate out of P.S. 17 and I.S. 126 beginning in the fall of 2014.

### Simotas supports the push to get students reading

- This summer, Assemblymember Simotas sponsored a series of “Proud to Read Aloud” events. Aimed to promote independent reading among elementary school students, the program is a part of the broader push for greater literacy and literary appreciation throughout New York’s schools.



*As a product of public schools in Astoria herself, Simotas was proud to read and discuss several books with students at several local schools.*

*“Our number one goal should always be to expand educational opportunities in our community and ensure each and every student has the chance to reach their fullest potential.”*

## WORKING FOR YOU IN ALBANY



*Upon passage of Assemblymember Simotas's Rape-is-Rape bill, survivor and advocate Lydia Cuomo was on hand in Albany to celebrate the legislation's protections for rape survivors across New York.*

Simotas authors important legislation during 2013 session:

### Protecting rape survivors (A.03339)

- The "Rape is Rape" bill expands the definition of rape in New York state, makes it easier to punish criminals, and ensures justice for rape survivors.

### Preserving utilities customers' rights (A.02197)

- Simotas' legislation protects a customer's right to be charged based on actual meter readings, rather than estimates.

### Strengthening life insurance (A.02130)

- Keeping insurers more secure and competitive will help to lower premiums for consumers; this bill gives life insurance companies more opportunities to pass savings along to customers.

### Ensuring pharmacy choice (A.02653)

- Simotas's bill ensures that workers injured on the job have the right to fill their prescriptions at the pharmacy of their choice.

### Protecting students' health (A.02126)

- This law strengthens regulations affecting children's health and ensures that students are able to apply sunscreen when spending time outside.



*Assemblymember Simotas has worked extensively on behalf of maintaining and improving public transit options for Astoria commuters.*

## ALERT! HOMEOWNERS RECEIVING STAR TAX EXEMPTIONS

Beginning in 2014, all New York homeowners receiving the Basic STAR tax exemption will need to complete a one-time registration to continue receiving the exemption. Keep a lookout for the forms and instructions that will be mailed to your home later this year. Seniors who receive Enhanced STAR do not need to register. Detailed information and instructions are available at <http://www.tax.ny.gov>.

## FREE NYC PRESCRIPTION DISCOUNT CARD

The Big Apple Rx is a prescription discount card that is accepted at over 2,000 pharmacies across the five boroughs. The card is free to residents of New York City regardless of age, income, or health insurance status. With Big Apple Rx card, you can save an average of 15% on brand name drugs and 53% on generic drugs. Simply cut out this card and present it at your local pharmacy to learn about your savings.



## HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

Our office is here to help you with utilizing state agency resources, addressing local issues, and making sure your voice is heard in Albany. The best ideas I hear for how to improve New York come directly from my constituents.

If you have any community concerns, let me know using the form below and mail it to **31-19 Newtown Ave., Suite 401, Astoria, NY 11102** or **fax it to 718-545-3607**. You can also always reach our office by phone at 718-545-3889 or email at [simotasa@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:simotasa@assembly.state.ny.us).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Issues: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Common issues include:

- Street lights out/damaged/wires exposed
- Street resurfacing needed
- Traffic sign/light issues
- Park or playground problems
- Bus stop signs missing or damaged
- Cars illegally parked
- Overnight truck parking on residential streets

Please join me for a...

## **FREE Seminar for Seniors** **Medicare, Health Insurance, and Local Resources**

**October 10, 2013 at 2:00 p.m.**  
**Iakovos Senior Center**  
**32-06 21st St., Astoria**

Healthcare industry professionals will be available to address all your questions related to Medicare, health insurance, and local resources in the community for seniors.