



Assemblymember
**ARAVELLA
SIMOTAS**
Reports to the Community



Fall 2015

Dear Neighbor,

I am excited to share news of our successes from the 2015 legislative session and information regarding the upcoming school year:

In Albany, my priority bills to enhance access to benefits under the Senior Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disabled Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs, ensure prenatal care for all women, and crack down on sex offenders who commit crimes on public transportation all passed the legislature this past Spring.

After a busy legislative session, I was glad to come home to Astoria to enjoy the many community events our neighborhood has to offer. In addition to the Summer Concert Series and Movies on the Waterfront, Astoria Park drew crowds from all over the city for the National Night Out Against Crime and Annual Astoria Fireworks Show.

I was proud to work with our representatives in Congress on some of the quality of life issues facing Astoria. In July, I joined Congressman Joe Crowley and local volunteers to clean up graffiti on Ditmars Boulevard, and in August, I joined Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and members of the Greek-American community to call for measures to restore the flow of remittances to Greece.

I would also like to invite all the parents with young children to join me and Mount Sinai Queens at our first annual Back to School Event on September 17th, at the Muslim American Society of Queens. As always, I am here to assist you. If you are having trouble with a state or local government issue, please do not hesitate to ask for help. My staff and I are available to help you obtain benefits that you are entitled to, provide information on government programs, and develop legislative solutions to issues facing our community.

Sincerely,

Aravella Simotas
New York State Assemblywoman

Working for You in Albany



■ SCRIE and DRIE

Simotas' bill to ensure that family members have adequate time to take over Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disabled Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) benefits following the death of a loved one passed the legislature this session. The legislation extends the period in which families have to file the necessary paperwork to inherit rent freeze benefits, helping senior citizens and people with disabilities to stay in their homes.

"This bill will give our seniors and neighbors with disabilities a reasonable amount of time to get their deceased loved ones' affairs in order while allowing them to remain in the communities they have worked so hard to build. It makes no sense to put affordable housing out of reach for senior citizens and people with disabilities just because they didn't get their paperwork in on time."

Cracking Down On Sex Offenders



Assemblymember Simotas' legislation to crack down on offenders who rub up against or ejaculate on another person on a bus, train or subway passed the legislature. Reports of this abhorrent behavior have spiked citywide, spurring Simotas to take action against these predatory criminals.

“Grinding or ejaculating on a victim is a disgusting act that violates not only the victim but all of us who ride the subway. This bill increases penalties to reflect that these crimes on public transportation are particularly egregious because riders are essentially captives of their attackers.”

Prenatal Care for All

The passage of Simotas' bill makes New York the first state in the nation to advance legislation to ensure prenatal care for all. Currently, New Yorkers can enroll for health insurance only during designated periods unless they experience a qualifying event. While giving birth is a qualifying event, becoming pregnant is not. This landmark legislation closes this loophole, allowing women who become pregnant to apply for insurance at any time and access potentially lifesaving prenatal care.



Photo by Katrina Hajagos

“This common sense legislative fix ensures that women have access to vital prenatal care and that babies have the best start in life. When I was pregnant, prenatal care was critical to my peace of mind and wellbeing and, of course, the health of my daughter. Denying a pregnant woman care because she missed an arbitrary enrollment period places minimal short-term costs ahead of long-term consequences for the health of the mother and the baby.”

Cleaning Up Astoria

“We all want a clean living environment for our growing community and to help our small businesses thrive. I am proud to call this place home and to continue my commitment to keeping Astoria clean. I urge all residents to call my office and report the location of any graffiti or vandalism.”



Simotas joined Congressman Joe Crowley, Council Member Costa Constantinides, and local volunteers to repaint vandalized mailboxes on Ditmars Boulevard.

Standing in Solidarity with the People of Greece



Simotas joined Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney as she called for measures to restore the flow of remittances to Greece.

As a result of capital controls, Greek citizens have been unable to freely access funds sent by friends and relatives from here in Astoria and around the world.

“Hard working Greek-Americans who have achieved the American dream want nothing more than to help out their families who are struggling during this hard time. For first and second generation immigrants, having enough money to send home to their family is a source of pride as well as a responsibility. We should do all that we can to ensure that these remittances reach their intended recipients in a timely manner.”

SCHOOL CALENDAR

September 9 – First Day of School, Early Dismissal for non-District 75 kindergarten students only.

September 10 – First full day for non-District 75 kindergarten students.

September 14-15 – Rosh Hashanah (Schools Closed)

September 23 – Yom Kippur (Schools Closed)

September 24 – Eid Al-Adha (Schools Closed)

October 12 – Columbus Day Observed (Schools Closed)

October 22 – Pre-kindergarten Non-Attendance Day

November 3 – Election Day (Schools Closed)

November 4-5 – Elementary School Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 9-10 – District 75 School Programs Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 11 – Veterans Day Observed (Schools Closed)

November 17-18 – Middle School Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 19-20 – High School Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 26-27 – Thanksgiving Recess (Schools Closed)

December 3 – Pre-kindergarten Non-Attendance Day

December 24-January 1 Winter Recess (Schools Closed)

January 18 – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Schools Closed)

January 28 - Pre-kindergarten Non-Attendance Day

February 1 – Chancellors conference Day for staff development in all non-D75 high schools only. High School Students do not attend school, except those enrolled at D75 school programs.

February 2 – Spring Term begins for High School Students

February 8 – Lunar New Year (Schools Closed)

February 15-19 – Midwinter Recess (Schools Closed)

March 2-3 – Elementary School Parent-Teacher Conferences

March 7-8 – District 75 School Programs Parent-Teacher Conferences

March 10-11 – High School Parent-Teacher Conferences

March 16-17 – Middle School Parent-Teacher Conferences

March 25 – Good Friday (Schools Closed)

April 21 – Pre-kindergarten Non-Attendance Day

April 25-29 – Spring Recess (Schools Closed)

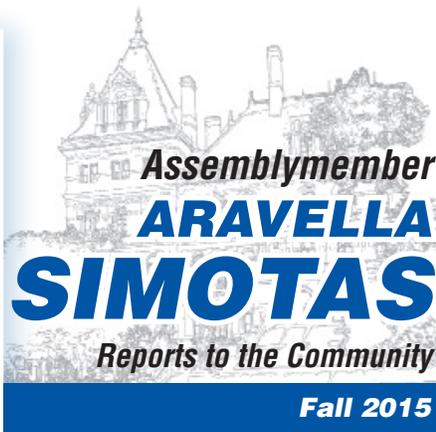
May 30 – Memorial Day (Schools Closed)

June 9 – Brooklyn-Queens Day (Schools Closed)

June 14 – June Clerical Day (Elementary and Middle Schools Closed)

June 23 – Regents Rating Day (High Schools closed except District 75 programs)

June 28 – Last Day of School (Early Dismissal)



Assemblymember Simotas will co-host a Back to School Event

with **Mount Sinai Queens**

September 17, 2015 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

at the **Muslim American Society of Queens**

25-15 Steinway Street, Astoria NY 11103

Please contact us at **718-545-3889** to RSVP or with any questions.

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