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Assemblymember Jim Brennan REPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

Fall 2014

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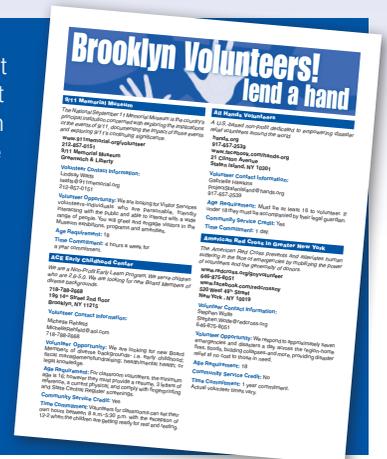
Brooklyn Volunteer Fair

Over 600 selfless Brooklynites descended on the Park Slope Armory on the evening of May 29th for the 2014 Volunteer Fair. My cosponsors, Assemblymember Joan Millman, Borough President Eric Adams, State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, Council Member Brad Lander, Community Boards 6, 7, 12 & 14, NY Methodist Hospital, Prospect Park Alliance, Park Slope Civic Council, ThinkBrooklyn, and I brought 100 nonprofit and community organizations together, for the event. Organization representatives staffed tables set up in long rows across the floor of the Armory and were promptly engaged by area residents in search of a great volunteer match!

Whether the cause of choice was animals, environment or housing; civil rights, voting rights or seniors; education, conservation or the arts; there was an organization to connect with! Opportunities were available for students looking to earn community service credit to retired individuals interested in contributing to their community. State Senator Velmanette Montgomery joined me at the Volunteer Fair to greet attendees and the participating organizations. (See photo on right).



If you missed the Fair but want to learn more about volunteer opportunities in Brooklyn check out the Volunteer Guide we put together...call my office at 718-788-7221 or email brennanj@assembly.state.ny.us for a copy or to download a copy, visit my website at assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-F-Brennan.



2014 Ballot Measures

This November, three proposals will appear on the ballot for voter approval or disapproval. The following is a brief explanation of these measures.

Creating an Independent Redistricting Commission to Draw the Boundaries for Legislative Districts

Currently, congressional and state legislative district lines are drawn by the state legislature every 10 years. The proposed amendment would change the process for drawing new districts by creating an independent Redistricting Commission with 10 members appointed in a bipartisan manner.

Each member of the commission must be a registered New York voter. Within the past three years, members of the commission could not have served as legislators or members of Congress, been elected to statewide office, worked as lobbyists, chaired a political party or been employed in the executive or legislative

branches of state government.

The process for the proposed independent Redistricting Commission:

- The commission would hold public hearings and make information available to the public
At least 7 of 10 members would need to vote to send the redistricting plan to the state Legislature for approval

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- The Legislature would vote on the plan submitted by the Independent Redistricting Commission
- If the Legislature rejects the plan, the commission would revise it, and if it is rejected again, the Legislature could amend it within narrow limits

When drawing new district lines, the proposed commission must:

- Work to guarantee minority voting rights
- Ensure communities of interest are protected
- Ensure candidates are not favored or disfavored
- Include approximately equal numbers of people for each district
- Make an effort to keep boundaries for each district contiguous and compact

Allowing the State Legislature to go Digital

This proposed amendment would eliminate the constitutional requirement that a bill must be printed on paper and placed on legislators' desks before becoming a law.

In current law, each year the New York State Legislature considers thousands of bills. The proposed process would allow for these bills to be "e-printed" and distributed to legislators electronically, rather than in physical paper form. Legislators would receive bills and amendments via their laptops, tablets and computers. The proposal would not affect other constitutional requirements for enacting bills into law.

Authorizing a \$2 Billion Smart Schools Bond Act

The proposed amendment would create a \$2 billion bond initiative that would provide funding for technology and infrastructure in New York State schools.

The Smart Schools Bond Act would fund:

- High-speed internet in schools
- Updated technologies in the classroom
- New classroom space for pre-K programs
- Projects that replace "classroom trailers" with permanent classroom space
- High-tech school safety measures

NYC Gas Pipelines

Following the gas explosion in Harlem in March of this year, I conducted a public hearing to explore gas safety measures as Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions. As a result of that hearing, the Assembly proposed a bill to authorize joint bidding on contracts for private utility work as part of public works projects throughout New York City.

Sponsored by the Assembly Speaker and myself, this bill builds on a similar law that was put into place after the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center for lower Manhattan. Public rights of way – such as roads and sidewalks – usually contain both publicly and privately owned utility services, water mains and sewers as well as gas, electric, telephone and cable lines. To cut down on delays, joint bidding would allow the City to include private utility work as part of the competitive bid process, resulting in one contract award for all the renovation or installation work on the necessary utilities. This will not only save both time and money but make it easier to schedule and replace gas pipelines.

One of the primary causes of gas leaks in New York City is the corrosion of the more than a hundred years old cast-iron gas mains, which deliver much of our gas. Modern gas mains are usually made of plastic, which is far safer as they are not susceptible to corrosion. As the old iron mains are replaced with modern plastic pipe, leaks decline and the likelihood of dangerous explosions declines as well.

This bill passed both houses of the Legislature and has been signed into law.

Medical Marijuana Agreement

On July 5th, New York became the 23rd state to authorize medical marijuana. The new law will not take effect for at least 18 months, as the Department of Health drafts detailed regulations to oversee both the manufacture and distribution of the drug, or possibly longer if the Department of Health determines more time is needed to get the program up and running. The new law, also known as the Compassionate Care Act, prohibits ingestion by smoking and only doctors that have taken a special course will be allowed to prescribe the drug to patients with one of 10 approved diseases. Recipients will have to register with the Department as well as carry their registration card with them at all times. Although comparatively limited in scope, this law is certainly a step forward in improving the lives of many sick New Yorkers by offering some relief.

The Women's Equality Act...What is it?

In January 2013, in his State of the State Address, the governor announced a 10-point plan for Women's Equality as part of the Women's Equality Agenda. A few months later the New York Women's Equality Coalition, a statewide alliance of over 850 women's groups with varying missions united in the battle for full women's equality, was formalized. Assemblywoman Michelle Titus (A.8070) and dozens of members of the Assembly, including myself, introduced the Governor's bill and it has passed the

Assembly in both 2013 and 2014. The ten points are listed below, and my office can provide you additional information about each of the issues associated with the ten points. A number of these proposals, including pay equity, have been passing the Assembly for many years. These commonsense measures are meant to update existing New York laws that will safeguard and guarantee the rights of the state's ten million women. Additional information is also available on the Assembly website, at assembly.state.ny.us.

If passed as an omnibus bill, as intended, the legislation would:

- Achieve pay equity;
- Stop sexual harassment in the workplace;
- Strengthen a woman's right to choose by putting court decisions into law;
- Strengthen human trafficking laws;
- Give domestic violence victims better protections;
- Eliminate housing discrimination for domestic violence victims;
- End family status discrimination;
- Stop pregnancy discrimination;
- Remove barriers to remedying discrimination; and
- Stop source-of-income discrimination.



This summer my office sponsored a public hearing on the MTA Capital Plan for 2015-19, their construction project budget. The purpose was to get public input into community needs for the next five years. The MTA and dozens of labor, civic, community board, and advocacy groups testified.

MTA Capital Plan to be Submitted Soon to Legislature, Governor, for Approval Brennan Committee Conducts Hearing

This September the MTA Board will propose its 2015-19 Capital Plan and submit it to the MTA CAPITAL PROGRAM REVIEW BOARD on October 1st for review and approval. THE MTA Capital Program Review Board is a body composed of representatives of the Assembly, the Senate, and the Governor, and they must give their unanimous approval for the MTA plan by January 1st of next year. The Capital plan is the construction and asset replacement five-year budget of the MTA. The current 2010-14 budget is costing nearly \$25 billion and includes regular replacement of subway cars and buses, track and signal system replacement and upgrades, communications upgrades, and the big expansion projects like the Second Avenue Subway and the East Side Access Project. I chaired a public hearing (see picture) on August 7th of the Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions on the plan.

One of our goals was to get local input into the plan. Borough President Adams advocated for linking Long Island Rail Road and East New York subway stations as well as additional elevators for the disabled. Church Avenue BID executive director Lauren Collins advocated for the rehabilitation of the Church Avenue B/Q train station. The next five-year plan could cost as much as \$30 billion, including the expansion projects, and the State Comptroller has identified a funding shortfall of at least \$12 billion.

The responsibility of the legislature and the governor

Clearly the subway and bus system must be maintained in a state of good repair. In addition, it is projected that one million more people will live in New York City twenty years from now, and another one million more people in the rest of the metropolitan area. Investments in mass transit must be continued, and the Governor and the Legislature must assure adequate funding for maintaining the system. In the current plan the MTA will borrow nearly \$15 billion, with current fares and dedicated taxes as the source of repayment for those borrowed funds. But as the MTA debt grows, the interest on the debt grows, too, putting an ever-increasing pressure on the fare. The State government must increase its contribution to the MTA from the State budget and find a new revenue source for the system within several years.



I was proud to be an honorary judge at the GallopNYC Ride with Pride event in June. Here I am awarding a champion ribbon to one of the winners. Gallop is a wonderful non-profit organization that offers therapeutic horseback riding lessons to children and adults with disabilities in NYC.

I have supported GallopNYC for quite some time now and admire the inspirational work they do.

Update on Walgreens and Key Food

My office helped coordinate a site visit on July 2 to discuss delays at the Walgreens store and get an estimate for when the Key Food will open. I met with several community members, Walgreens representatives, and representatives from Brad Lander's office. We were given information about the delays in construction which included the long and severe winter, structural problems, and necessary electrical upgrades.

After months of frustrating delays, it appears that the end is near. As we go to press, Walgreens is tentatively expected to open on September 19. The Key Food site is currently not as far along as the Walgreens site and is anticipated to open sometime after Walgreens opens. I invite you to contact my office for updates: 718-788-7221.

Port Authority Overhaul Passes New York State Assembly and Senate Must Pass New Jersey Legislature and be Signed by Both Governors

I have sponsored legislation that provides for a comprehensive reform and overhaul of the ethical and transparency standards of the operations of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. This legislation has passed the New York State Assembly and Senate. Because the Port Authority is a bi-state agency, the same legislation must also pass the New Jersey legislature and be signed by both Governors. Bills identical to those that have passed New York have been introduced in the New Jersey Assembly and Senate. The New Jersey legislators are working vigorously to get those legislative bodies to pass those bills.

The legislation provides that the commissioners of the Port Authority owe a duty of loyalty and care to the mission of the agency and to the public interest, which they must certify and acknowledge in writing. This should curb abuses like diverting funds to pay for highways in New Jersey (the Pulaski Skyway).

Some of the recent troubling actions of the Port Authority, such as Bridgegate, the diversion of funds for the Pulaski Skyway, the huge toll increases, and others would be far less likely to repeat themselves with these strong reforms.

In addition, the legislation would:

- require officers and employees to report corruption, conflict-of-interest, and abuses to the Port Authority Inspector General;
- apply the open meetings laws and the ethics and financial disclosure laws of New York and New Jersey to the Port Authority;
- prohibit commissioners from voting on matters in which they have a conflict of interest;
- require independent financial assessments of the need for toll hikes 120 days before taking votes, and allow for extensive public hearings in both states;
- establish written policies on land acquisitions and dispositions; and
- many other policies intended to assure transparency and accountability in ethics, budgets, and spending.



I hosted a meeting with the State Department of Transportation on June 29 at Ditmas Junior High School to discuss traffic safety along Ocean Parkway. The state will be spending \$6 million on these improvements and this meeting was an opportunity for the community to offer input into these proposed plans.



Assemblymember

**Jim
Brennan**

*Reports to
the People*

FALL 2014

Coming in the Fall to my
District Offices!

Flu Shots

MetroCard Mobile Unit

Call my office (718-788-7221) in September for an update on exact timing for these important constituent services.



My two district offices hosted our annual visit from the American-Italian Cancer Foundation's Mobile Care Clinic on July 10th and 35 women in my district received a free breast cancer screening. These dedicated technicians and nurses perform an invaluable service!