



Assemblymember Jim Brennan

REPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

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This newsletter contains information on activities of my office and the recently concluded 2015 legislative session. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns. I hope you have enjoyed your summer and best wishes for the fall.

Yours,

James F. Brennan
Assemblymember Jim Brennan

Anti-Corruption Laws Are Strengthened

More than 20 New York state legislators have been convicted or accused of corruption since the early 2000s, and quite a few more have engaged in other forms of serious misconduct resulting in resignations or leaving office. These betrayals of the public trust are outrageous and appalling. Reports to Congress by the United States Department of Justice show that Federal prosecutors have convicted thousands of public officials across the nation in the past ten years; Americans are fortunate that independent Federal prosecutors have made combatting corruption a priority.

Prosecuting Bribery

New York keeps strengthening its anti-corruption laws. In 2014, we made it easier in New York to prosecute and convict for bribery, and increased the penalties for giving and receiving bribes. We also created a new crime, “Corrupting the Government,” to punish persons engaged in schemes to defraud state and local government, with sentences of up to 25 years in prison and lifetime bans for benefiting from government contracts. In 2010, we prohibited public officials from using state government resources for private business activities and made such conduct a felony.

Stripping Elected Officials of their Public Pensions When Convicted of Corruption

In 2015, the Assembly took the important step of passing a proposed constitutional amendment to strip public officials of their pensions if convicted of public corruption. Identical legislation must pass both houses in two consecutively-elected legislatures, and gain statewide voter approval in 2017, for this to go into effect. Legislation passed in 2011 applies this pension forfeiture to public officials who entered service after enactment of the 2011 law.

Per Diem Reform

This year the legislature reformed the per diem system following several incidents of elected officials misusing the program for personal gain. Each house of the legislature must adopt procedures, including electronic verification, to ensure that public officials are entitled to travel reimbursement and expenses. Each house must post on its website documents related to the payment of travel expenses and per diems.

Disclosure of Outside Income

The legislature expanded the mandatory disclosure of outside income in 2015. Many state officials, including members of the Legislature,

must describe with particularity, all sources of outside income. Public officers who practice law and certain other professions must disclose the names of clients or customers, if the official earns more than \$10,000 from outside employment and more than \$5,000 from the client or customer, with certain exceptions like legal representation in criminal cases or domestic relations cases.

Election Law and Use of Campaign Funds Reforms

With the State Board of Elections mired in partisan gridlock, in 2014 the Legislature passed a law to create an independent Election Law Enforcement Counsel to strengthen compliance with the Election Law. This year the Legislature enacted new measures to better define the appropriate use of campaign contributions and require the Board of Elections to issue advisory opinions regarding such use. We have also strengthened disclosure and reporting requirement for independent political expenditures, where “Super-PACs” spend money independently of candidates.

Two Major Reforms Still Not Passed by the State Senate

This year the Assembly sought to close down a major loophole in the election law that allowed limited liability corporations to bypass corporate contribution limits. Corporations are limited to \$5,000 contributions to New York candidates, but the State Board of Elections created a loophole in the 1990s that allowed LLCs to contribute up to the maximum aggregate limit for individuals (\$150,000). The Assembly passed A. 6975-b, which limits LLC contributions to the corporate limit.

The Senate has not acted on this legislation.

Public Financing of Elections

A major campaign finance reform that applies in New York City and other parts of the nation does not apply for New York State elections except State Comptroller. Public financing of elections enables candidates to receive public matching funds for small campaign donations, helping limit the influence of

Legislative Update (continued on Page 2)

SAVE THE DATE
Mobile Mammography and Metro card Van
Wednesday, September 30th, 2015 See Page 4

wealthy donors and special interest contributions. The State Assembly has passed public financing of elections 17 times since 1985, the first year I was elected to the State Assembly. The Assembly's most recent passage was in 2014. The State Senate has never acted on this legislation.

A public financing of elections bill, A. 7870, has been introduced this year which contains numerous ethics reforms as well, which I am co-sponsoring.

Cuomo, New York Assembly and Senate Agree on Port Authority Overhaul

I am pleased to report that a compromise on a bill to strengthen the ethical and financial standards under which the Port Authority makes decisions and improve the agency's transparency and accountability to the public has been concluded between Governor Cuomo and the New York Assembly and Senate and passed the New York Legislature at the end of June. See my website for a discussion of A.8298. Governor Christie has also agreed to sign this legislation, which must still be passed by the New Jersey Legislature. Efforts are underway to iron out remaining differences among the parties.

Rent Laws Extended, but Only Modest Changes

Tenant Advocacy groups and the State Assembly made strenuous efforts to gain substantial improvements in the rent laws, but resistance from the State Senate resulted in only modest changes.

Although the Assembly passed measures like the repeal of vacancy decontrol, which I support, it is clear that the composition of the State Senate must change before tenants can make major gains.

Here are the rent regulation changes:

- The Legislature passed a 4-year extension of rent regulation, with some tenant protection improvements to current law, including:
 - increasing the vacancy decontrol threshold from \$2,500 to \$2,700 and indexing this threshold to future Rent Guideline Board increases; and
 - stretching the Major Capital Improvement (MCI) payment schedule from 84 months to 96 months for buildings with 35 and fewer units, and to 108 months for buildings with more than 35 units – a change to help tenants keep more money in their pockets by reducing rent increases associated with MCI's.
- In an effort to keep rents from skyrocketing, the Assembly also negotiated a cap for the amount by which a landlord can increase the rent when a tenant with preferential rent leaves the apartment. If a previous vacancy lease commenced:
 - Less than 2 years ago, the vacancy increase would be capped at 5 percent;
 - Less than 3 years ago, the vacancy increase would be capped at 10 percent;
 - Less than 4 years ago, the vacancy increase would be capped at 15 percent; or,

- 4 or more years ago, the vacancy increase would be capped at 20 percent.
- Additionally, the Legislature enacted higher civil penalties for landlords who harass tenants with the intent to force a vacancy and who violate DHCR orders.

I remain committed to repealing vacancy decontrol and other major reforms but change must occur in the State Senate to win these goals.

Wrap-Up on Public Schools and State Test Policy

As the legislative session for 2015 ended in June, both the Legislature and the Regents/State Education Department took actions affecting State testing policy in the public schools.

The Legislature has enacted a State law that will phase out the use of multiple-choice "field" tests and require many more test questions and answers to be publicly-released. It will take more than a year for implementation.

The Regents/State Education Department adopted the regulations for teacher evaluations required as part of the adopted budget.

For a discussion of these actions and the details you can visit my website at assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-F-Brennan

While Governor Cuomo's high-stakes testing agenda has been blunted, there is much work to do to roll it back. This fall my office will introduce legislation to eliminate the use of test scores for teacher evaluations.



*In mid-May, Assemblymember Brennan, joined by the two Brooklyn Regents Dr. Kathleen Cashin and Dr. Lester Young, sponsored a community meeting, hosted by PS 10, to help local residents gain a voice in the **development of new standards for teacher evaluations.***



*Joined by community partners representing: Allama Iqbal Community Center, the American Council of Minority Women (ACMW), the Pakistan American Merchants Association (PAMA), Council of People's Organization (COPO) and National Youth Organization of Pakistan, and staff member Mariam Ahmed, Assemblymember Brennan sponsored a **Voter Registration Drive** alongside PS 217's Playground, explaining the importance of registering to vote and having a say in community funding and activities.*



*Assemblymember Brennan joined 300+ community residents at his **Annual Brooklyn Volunteer – Lend a Hand Fair** at the Park Slope Armory. The event brought together nearly 60 Brooklyn serving organizations that rely upon volunteers to enrich our communities. Please review the 2015 Volunteer Guide on my website assembly.state.ny.us/mem/James-F-Brennan/ for your future volunteer activities.*



Assemblymember Brennan toured the South Brooklyn Community Organization's (SBCO's) development site for the **Culver Houses** with David M. Singer, Menachem M. Shayovich, Rabbi Avrohom Jaffe, Tom Bauer, Abraham Moses and Steve Moses. Phase I consists of 9 buildings, located on 37th Street, between 12th and 13th Avenues.



Assemblymember Brennan participated in a video interview with students from the **Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)** as they engaged in a discussion on the subway fare hike, transportation, funding the MTA, and the state's role in the process.



Assemblymember Brennan, his colleagues in government, Councilmember Brad Lander and former Borough President Marty Markowitz, Amin Siad of Key Food's main office and community residents participated in the official ribbon cutting of the long-awaited re-opening of the Key Food grocery store at 589 Prospect Avenue. "I commend the efforts spearheaded by Lauren Elvers Collins, Ryan Lynch and the many community residents whose time and energy culminated in Joe Zahriyeh's commitment to returning Key Food – Windsor Farms Marketplace to our community," said Brennan.

WORKING WITH YOU ON BEHALF OF OUR COMMUNITY

Traffic Safety Agents Continue at Caton, Ft. Hamilton and McDonald

After a meeting of concerned parents and community members two years ago, I was able to work with NYPD central command to get four traffic agents assigned to the **McDonald Avenue intersections at Caton Avenue and Fort Hamilton Parkway**. As area residents know, these roads experience a tremendous amount of tractor trailer activity in addition to regular high volume traffic. These NYPD agents are on duty during the school year in the morning as children arrive at school and in the afternoon during dismissal.

Improved Traffic Safety for Families at PS 230

At a meeting last spring to inform public school parents about the State Education budget a group of involved **PS 230** parents asked me to help them address the unsafe traffic conditions around the school. Children and families must cross some heavy traffic. I contacted the Brooklyn Commissioner of the NYC Department of Transportation and encouraged the parents of **PS 230** to express their concerns as well with letters and petitions. I am pleased to report that NYC DOT will establish a "School Slow Zone." See the adjacent map below which highlights the new signage and street markings.

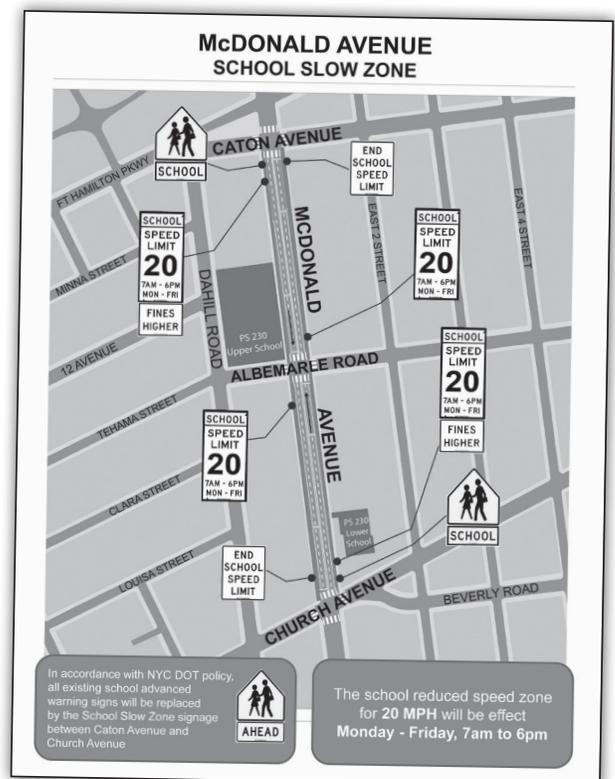
Church Avenue "F" train Security Cameras

The **Church Avenue F/G station in Kensington** is a huge subway station with extensive underground walkways. Last year my office designated **\$1 million** in state funds to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to install security cameras throughout the station. The installation is complete and the cameras will be activated soon.

LED Street Lights in Windsor Terrace Too Bright

In early spring, my District Office received numerous complaints regarding the installation of new **LED lights** in Windsor Terrace. And although I support the installation of energy efficient lighting,

residents were complaining that the new LED's were having an adverse effect on their quality of life because of their excessive illumination. I am pleased to report that as a result of my apprising NYC Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg of this problem, DOT's Street Lighting Division worked with their LED fixtures manufacturer to address the concerns raised. It is my understanding that many of the problem street lights have since had their LED bulbs changed to a less bright bulb.



Assemblymember Brennan's multi-lingual staff, including Russian speaking, **Русско-говорящий** is able to assist constituents with a variety of issues including tenant landlord issues, entitlement programs, quality of life issues, etc. Please feel free to meet with Yan at my **Park Slope office, 416 7th Avenue, Monday, Wednesday or Friday, from 10 A.M.-5 P.M.**, or telephone him at **718 788-7221**.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

Co-sponsored with the

**American Italian Cancer Foundation
Mobile Mammography Care Clinic at
Assemblymember**

Brennan's District Offices

9 A.M.-Noon at 416 7th Avenue
2 P.M. -4:30 P.M. at 1414 Cortelyou Road
For an appointment please telephone
1-877-628-9090

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

Metro Card Mobile Van at

Assemblymember

Brennan's District Offices

9 A.M.-Noon at 1414 Cortelyou Road
2 P.M.-4:30 P.M. at 416 7th Avenue

For additional information on any of these **FREE** events and to schedule your individual counseling session with Housing and Family Services of Greater New York, please telephone by office at 718 788-7221.

Thursday, October 15th, 2015

*Partnering with Housing and Family
Services of Greater New York*

Formerly Brooklyn Housing and Family
Services with more than 40 years of
experience in our community
9:30 A.M.-1 P.M. at

Assemblymember Brennan's office
1414 Cortelyou Road

Do you live in an apartment building?

**Do you have a problem in your
apartment or building? Are you a
senior citizen, with a household
income of \$50,000 or less? You may
be eligible for the Senior Citizen Rent
Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program.
Individualized assistance will be
available with a Housing Counselor
experienced in these issues.**

Tuesday, October 20th, 2015

Partnering with

Ocean Parkway Development Corp.

Good Credit is Up to You!

Learn How to Make

Smart Credit Choices!

7PM at Ditmas Junior High School

700 Cortelyou Road

(between East 7th and East 8th Streets)

Thursday, October 22nd, 2015

*Partnering with Housing and Family
Services of Greater New York*

Formerly Brooklyn Housing and Family
Services with more than 40 years of
experience in our community

Noon-5 P.M. at **Assemblymember
Brennan's District Office** 416 7th Avenue
**One on One Foreclosure Prevention
Counseling for Homeowners**

MID FALL EVENT

Date to be determined

Partnering with Heights and Hills at

Park Slope Center for

Successful Aging formerly

The Park Slope Senior Center

463A 7th Street

(between 6th and 7th Avenues)

Legal and Healthcare Planning for

Caregivers and Seniors –

Wills, Estates, Finances



Assemblymember
**Jim
Brennan**

***Reports to
the People***

SUMMER 2015

MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY REMINDER

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

9 A.M.-Noon at 416 7th Avenue

2 P.M. -4:30 P.M. at 1414 Cortelyou Road

For an appointment please telephone (1) 877-628-9090