

Spring 2017

Assemblyman CYMBROWITZ

Reports to the Community



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Dear Neighbor,

At the start of this year's legislative session, I was honored to be appointed Housing Committee Chair by Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie. This is an exciting position, one that allows me to use my extensive background in housing (I worked at both the New York City Housing Authority and Department of Housing Preservation and Development) to advance legislation to provide safe, affordable, and accessible housing to millions of New Yorkers.

Among its many duties, the Housing Committee addresses issues that directly affect low- and middle-income families across New York State, including public housing, the Mitchell-Lama housing program and rent regulation protections.

Right after becoming Housing Chair, I started meeting with housing advocates and city and state officials to hear what they had to say and determine our battle plan for budget negotiations. It became clear that affordable housing was a top priority, as was supportive housing for seniors and other vulnerable New Yorkers. For our fixed-income seniors, for families working to make a better life for their children, and for so many other vulnerable New Yorkers, housing is an all-consuming issue that can make or break their lives.

I fought hard during budget talks, but the \$2.5 billion we achieved in the final budget for affordable and supportive housing made it worthwhile. In the coming months and years I'll continue fighting for housing and other basic needs that are essential to New Yorkers' lives.

Please take a few minutes to read this newsletter, which contains important information on legislative accomplishments and things I've been doing in our community.

My district office is located at 1800 Sheepshead Bay Road and my staff and I are here to serve you. We're open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. You can reach me at (718) 743-4078 or email cymbros@nyassembly.gov.

Thanks for your support and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven H. Cymbrowitz". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steven H. Cymbrowitz
Member of Assembly

NYS Budget Enhances Quality of Life for New Yorkers

The 2017-18 budget makes a significant investment in schools, funds the nation's first free tuition plan to help students go to college, and includes a \$2.5 billion five-year plan to ensure that seniors and families have access to affordable and supportive housing, Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn) said.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz, Chair of the Housing Committee, said the \$2.5 billion plan includes \$1 billion for supportive housing to construct 6,000 or more units statewide, \$200 million for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) capital repairs, and \$125 million for senior housing, among other provisions.

"A secure, affordable place to live is vital to every family's health and stability," said Assemblyman Cymbrowitz. "This budget demonstrates our commitment to funding services and programs that help ensure that all New Yorkers, including our most vulnerable residents, have a place to call home."

For the second year in a row, the budget increases funds for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NNORCs), which help keep seniors in their homes and neighborhoods. Last year, as Chair of the Aging Committee, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz fought for the long-awaited NORC funding increases to ensure they were included in the one-house budget and enacted in the final budget.

As part of the State's continuing effort to combat opioid/heroin abuse, begun while Assemblyman Cymbrowitz chaired the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committee, the budget increases funding by \$43 million over last year to fight the heroin epidemic and increase access to treatment for New Yorkers struggling with a substance abuse disorder.

The budget increases education aid by \$1 billion for a total of \$25.7 billion. It provides \$25 million for technology projects at nonpublic schools and \$25 million for security upgrades to nonpublic schools, community centers and daycare facilities at risk of hate crimes or attacks; and provides nonpublic schools \$5 million to hire STEM teachers and \$7 million for costs related to complying with immunization requirements, along with an \$8 million increase for nonpublic school aid.

The budget provides funding to establish the Excelsior Scholarship, making SUNY and CUNY tuition-free for New Yorkers who earn less than \$125,000 annually. Students who attend a private college in New York and earn less than \$125,000 annually would also be eligible for a scholarship award of \$6,000.

The budget implements previously-approved middle-class income tax cuts and enhances the Child and Dependent Care Credit for taxpayers earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000. To support seniors' health and well-being, the budget provides \$13.5 million to support long-term care, including restoring \$10 million to preserve spousal refusal, ensuring couples do not lose their life savings in the event a spouse becomes ill and needs nursing home care.

With the rise in hate crimes in recent months, the state budget establishes a Hate Crimes Task Force in New York to prevent, investigate and detect hate crimes, as well as issue reports to combat these crimes and other forms of discrimination.

"The final budget includes so many of the important issues and policies we have been fighting for to strengthen the quality of life for the hardworking people of my district and throughout New York State," Assemblyman Cymbrowitz said.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Brings Long-Overdue Action to Forgotten Street Corner

In 2010, when pieces of a retaining wall extending from the train track on Gravesend Neck Road and East 16th Street started raining down onto the sidewalk, the city closed off the site to pedestrian traffic as a safety precaution.

That was the moment when time began to stand still at the corner. By 2017, little had changed except that toddlers who were in baby carriages when the site was blocked off were now able to sidestep it on their own.

“Over the years a fence appeared around the perimeter of the location, but it remained un-repaired, not to mention a huge inconvenience to all the people who didn’t have access to the corner for the better part of a decade,” recalled Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn), whose district includes that street. The location also became an illegal dumping ground for trash. “We all know the stereotype that bureaucracy moves at a crawl, but this should’ve been a relatively quick fix to shore up a wall. Instead it was simply forgotten,” he said.

In the summer of 2016, a call from a constituent alerted Assemblyman Cymbrowitz to the situation and his office started investigating why the repairs never happened. It turned out the problem was jurisdiction. “Since it was an

extension of the wall by the train track, everyone assumed it was the MTA’s responsibility to fix it. But that wasn’t the case, and determining ownership wasn’t simple,” he said. Adding to the mystery was that the location was non-existent on the city’s tax maps.

After shopping the issue around to various agencies, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz’ office contacted the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), which referred him to the city’s Department of Buildings. Buildings confirmed that in July 2010 it had found the retaining wall on Neck Road and East 16th Street to be structurally defective and in danger of collapse. But since MTA didn’t have jurisdiction, as was believed, the repairs were never made and the site remained stagnant.

Prompted by questions from Assemblyman Cymbrowitz’ office in 2016, Buildings once again contacted agencies

potentially responsible for the site and the Department of Transportation (DOT) claimed responsibility. DOT began repairs in April and the corner reopened the second week in May. “I’m pleased we were able to get things moving in the right direction,” Assemblyman Cymbrowitz said. “Better late than never.”



Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn) honored the student winners of his 17th annual Holocaust Memorial Creative Arts Contest during a ceremony at Kingsborough Community College’s Marine Academic Center. The ceremony featured remarks by Michelle Anderson, President of Brooklyn College.

“I’m proud that the Assembly district I represent includes many thousands of immigrants -- people who came to the U.S. to escape countries where they couldn’t vote, couldn’t practice their religion and where they feared for their physical safety,” he said. “Blind hatred offends all of us deeply. We’re united by our respect for people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds. Our strength lies in our desire to treat each other with decency and kindness, and to speak out whenever we see people being mistreated.”

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Honors Winners of 17th Annual Holocaust Memorial Creative Arts Contest

Addressing the sharp rise in anti-Semitic incidents over the last year, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz told the audience, “Anti-Semitism is still alive and well, and that’s the reality we’re living with today. It’s a frightening reality, but being afraid won’t help us. What will help us is using our voices to stamp out hate. Using our words to make the world a better place.”

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz sponsors the contest with the Manhattan Beach Jewish Center, Holocaust Memorial Committee, the Lena Cymbrowitz Foundation and Project Witness to honor the six million who perished and also to teach students that anti-Semitism and bias-motivated violence remain painfully relevant issues.

The ceremony included musical performances by the Edward R. Murrow High School Orchestra and Senior Chorus. The contest attracted entries ranging from essays to



artwork to original dramatic performances all conceived by third- through 12th graders in public and private schools throughout Assemblyman Cymbrowitz’ district.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Tours New Ohel Headquarters in Midwood



Assemblyman Cymbrowitz recently toured the Midwood construction project that will become the new headquarters of Ohel Children's Home and Family Services later this summer. Amy Bierig, Ohel's chief administrative officer, showed the assemblyman around the new building – formerly home of the historic Vitagraph Studios -- that will be known as the Ohel Jaffa Family Campus, offering individual and family support services including foster care, adolescent residential programs, domestic violence counseling, substance abuse and addiction programs, sexual abuse programs, school-based mental health services and preventive care. "For almost half a century, Ohel has provided a helping hand to people of all ages. I'm pleased that Ohel's services will now be under one roof and accessible to all residents in need of guidance and support," Assemblyman Cymbrowitz said.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Hosts Community Housing Roundtable



As the Chair of the Assembly's Housing Committee, I hosted a roundtable in my district office so that neighborhood organizations could give me their thoughts on important housing issues impacting our communities. In attendance were Community Board 13 district manager Eddie Mark; CB 15 Chair Theresa Scavo; Brighton Neighborhood Association Executive Director Pat Singer; Midwood Development Executive Director Linda Goodman and Bilingual Housing Counselor Nina Akopyan; Greater Sheepshead Bay

Development Corporation Executive Director Ellen Susnow; Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn Executive Director Tonya Ores and Program Director Elizabeth Malone; and Housing and Family Services of Greater New York Director of Neighborhood Preservation Services John Goss. Among the issues that came up were affordable and supportive housing and foreclosure protection services to keep residents in their homes, all high priorities of mine in Albany.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Joins Mayor to Push for Expanded Property Tax Relief for Senior and Disabled Homeowners

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz joined Mayor Bill de Blasio and state and city lawmakers in Brighton Beach to support the passage of legislation (A7463) that would expand property tax exemptions for senior citizens and disabled New Yorkers.

Under current law, senior citizens and disabled individuals making up to \$37,400 annually can receive property tax relief under the Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption (SCHE) or the Disability Homeowners' Exemption (DHE) programs. The legislation, introduced by Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh (D-Manhattan) and State Senator Diane Savino (D-Brooklyn) and multi-sponsored by Assemblyman Cymbrowitz, would raise the maximum income threshold to \$58,400, the first change to the cap since 2009.

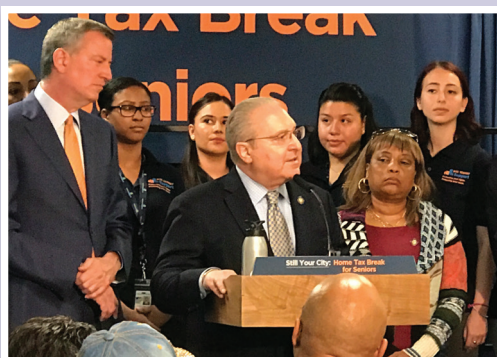
More than 57,000 New York City homeowners are currently enrolled in these programs. This adjustment would allow another 32,000 households to qualify.

"With higher than average health expenses and steady increases in the cost of living, senior and disabled homeowners are fighting harder than ever to

make ends meet and still pay their property taxes. This is unfair, it's morally wrong and it's long overdue that we correct it legislatively," said Assemblyman Cymbrowitz, who previously chaired the Aging Committee. "I want to thank Mayor de Blasio for supporting this important legislation and for joining me in fighting for more affordable housing across our city."

Back in March, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz joined the Mayor at the Mirage Diner on Kings Highway to announce legislation he introduced that would create the Elder Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), a rent

subsidy for seniors who are paying more than 30 percent of their monthly income toward their rent and have a total income that does not exceed 80 percent of the area median income. Funds for the program would be raised through a 2.5 percent transfer tax paid by the buyer on high-end real estate transactions of condos, co-ops and one- to three-family homes. The tax would apply only to the amount of the transaction exceeding \$2 million.



Bill Co-Sponsored by Assemblyman Cymbrowitz to Delay 'Bag Tax' Signed by Governor Cuomo

“This is great news for the people of New York City who were going to be saddled with a costly and punitive law with no clear environmental benefit.”

**— Assemblyman
Cymbrowitz**

A bill co-sponsored by Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn) to postpone implementation of the so-called plastic 'bag tax' in New York City was signed by Governor Cuomo, one day before the nickel-per-bag fee established by the City Council was set to go into effect.

“This is great news for the people of New York City who were going to be saddled with a costly and punitive law with no clear environmental benefit,” said Assemblyman Cymbrowitz.

In 2016, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz and his colleagues, led by Speaker Carl Heastie, convinced the city to postpone implementation of the bag fee until February 15th of this year to give the Council time to come up with an alternative plan. Assemblyman Cymbrowitz spoke out against the fee publicly and started a petition on his website that was signed by hundreds of residents.

As the deadline drew near without action by the Council, the Legislature came up with the moratorium “to spare residents a tax that was both unconscionably expensive and utterly without merit,” Assemblyman Cymbrowitz said.

“None of the revenue accrued from the bag tax – not a penny -- was going to be directed toward environmental improvement or for any use that was beneficial to the public. This was a serious flaw that the Governor recognized.”

The legislation was sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Michael Cusick (D-Staten Island) and in the Senate by Senator Simcha Felder (D-Brooklyn).

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Assemblyman
**STEVEN
CYMBROWITZ**

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Improvements Coming to Mellett Playground

After hearing from constituents about issues at Mellett Playground, Avenue V and East 14th Street, I asked Brooklyn Borough Parks Commissioner Marty Maher to join me and community members in visiting the park and looking at problems that need attention. Mellett Playground is a great community resource for our children, and the Parks Department committed itself to making short- and long-term improvements that will keep the park safe and beautiful for all to enjoy. Thanks to the residents who took time out of their day to help their community.

