



News from the Neighborhood

New York State Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol

Fall 2013

So much goes on in the 50th Assembly District it is difficult to cover all the topics. In this newsletter, the focus will be on both our local neighborhoods as well as Assemblyman Lentol's work in Albany from January to June where he works on the state budget and other statewide legislative issues. Assemblyman Lentol has been working with his colleagues to help New York achieve a brighter future. Here, Assemblyman Lentol reviews the 2013 legislative session highlights intended to create a better, stronger New York. In two subsequent newsletters, the focus will be on several other very important issues you will want to follow.

Minimum wage increase

This year, Assemblyman Lentol joined his colleagues to increase the minimum wage. They were successful in raising the minimum wage to \$9.00 per hour. Raising the minimum wage was the right thing to do for workers and will put more money into the pockets of those most likely to spend it locally. The weekly unemployment benefit will also gradually increase from \$405 per week to 50% of the state's average weekly wage.

New York's budget provides significant tax relief for families and small businesses

This year's state budget ensures that hardworking families keep paying the lowest tax rate in 60 years—while reducing tax burdens on businesses to help create jobs. The 2013 fiscal plan continued a commitment to put more money in the pockets of working families by extending a personal income tax reduction at a locked rate to the middle class for three more years. Families with incomes between \$40,000 and \$300,000 will benefit from the creation of a \$350 tax credit per child. And, energy taxes were reduced—which will save New York customers over \$500 million by fiscal year 2017-18.

For small business, the legislature created a tax credit for those that hire veterans. Additionally, in an effort to create more jobs, the current 3.25 percent tax rate on manufacturing companies will be reduced to 2.4 percent by 2018.

State budget secures over \$360 million more for NYC's schools and supports college aid and libraries

Always a priority, New York City public schools receive a great deal of attention every budget cycle. This year, Assemblyman Lentol pushed for a \$364 million increase over last year and a \$240 million restoration for future years to prevent an ongoing penalty to our schools due to a missed deadline for a teacher and principal evaluation plan. In addition, he secured new grants for full-day and half-day pre-K seats. Part of this education budget includes a \$4.2 million statewide increase for public libraries. There is also increased support to Full Time Equivalent students at SUNY and CUNY community colleges.

**Community Meeting
on Greenpoint
Environmental Fund
September 25th
See article inside**



Assemblyman Joe Lentol joins Rabbi David Niederman, Executive Director of the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg and others to hand out lunches as the new school year begins.



Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce/kids/graffiti clean-up. Assemblyman Lentol, members of the Greenpoint Youth Court, and Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce stop for a photo during a busy day of cleaning up graffiti in the neighborhood. The Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce, led by Jeff Mann, and the Greenpoint Youth Court, led by Dana Rachlin, organized several local neighborhood graffiti clean-up days. They were a huge success, but graffiti in the neighborhood continues to be a quality of life concern.

Assemblyman Lentol advocates for bike lane on Pulaski Bridge

Last year, a group of North Brooklyn residents approached Assemblyman Lentol about the dangers for pedestrians and cyclists on the Pulaski Bridge as they try to pass each other on the narrow pedestrian path on the western side of the bridge. This discussion resulted in a meeting with representatives from the Department of Transportation, Transportation Alternatives, and local residents in which all parties agreed that a study should be conducted to determine the feasibility of converting a lane of vehicle traffic into a dedicated bike lane.

The Department of Transportation has analyzed traffic data on the Pulaski Bridge and is confident that a vehicle lane can be removed without any adverse effect on traffic flow. What remains now is a question of how to properly design and install such a bike path. An initial engineering report addressing these concerns will be released this fall.

Funding the project is also an important concern. To that end, Assemblyman Lentol has requested funding from New York State to carry out the project.

State-of-the-art schools are built by communities

Assemblyman Lentol is working to create a partnership between local film studios, the Dept. of Education, and community education advocates to bring new public middle and high schools to the Williamsburg-Greenpoint area with a focus on film, television, drama, and technology. But first, the Dept. of Education must recognize that there is a need for these schools in the area. Strong community support must be marshalled. It won't be easy, but in the end the same dynamics which will get these schools off the ground will ensure their ongoing success. Assemblyman Lentol will lead this effort.

The Greenpoint Youth Court creates a positive influence on our youth and our community

There is no greater sense of pride than when our youth creates a positive impact on our community and its residents. In 2009, Assemblyman Lentol helped to fund and create the Greenpoint Youth Court to do exactly that. Its mission is to use positive peer pressure on young people who have committed minor offenses to get them to pay back the community and get them the help they need to avoid further involvement in the justice system. The Greenpoint Youth Court trains local teenagers to serve as jurors, judges, and attorneys to handle real-life cases involving their peers. Over the years, Assemblyman Lentol has worked to connect the Greenpoint Youth Court with local community groups and businesses to help foster and further evolve the mission of the Youth Court while creating positive changes within the neighborhood. The overwhelming success of the Greenpoint Youth Court is a testament to our youth generating positive influences and relationships in the community, which is exactly why Assemblyman Lentol continues to support this program.



Assemblyman Lentol visited the Greenpoint Youth Court and discussed politics and criminal justice policies.

HOMEOWNERS: Make certain you maintain your STAR property tax exemption!

**IF YOU RECEIVE THE
BASIC STAR EXEMPTION
YOU MUST REGISTER WITH THE
TAX DEPARTMENT.**

**STAR REGISTRATION BEGAN
IN AUGUST AND WILL END
DECEMBER 31, 2013.**

**DON'T WAIT, register now. For more
information go to www.tax.ny.gov, click
on "Register for STAR."**



Assemblyman Lentol speaks at a financial planning workshop held at the Polish Slavic Senior Center.

Restoration of funds to New York's most vulnerable

Assemblyman Lentol helped restore essential funding—up to \$90 million—to non-profits that provide vital services to New York's developmentally disabled and their families. Originally, these funds had been cut from the NYS Budget, but Assemblyman Lentol and his colleagues knew the services are essential to the quality of life for New York's most vulnerable.



A new model of open space

Assemblyman Lentol is pushing developers to make pop-up parks on unused land while they wait to start construction. The innovative idea took root with the lightning-fast development of Havemeyer Park by a local developer. To get other developers to pursue similar projects, Assemblyman Lentol introduced bill A.7823 which would exempt landowners from property taxes while the land is converted to open space for community use. As more people see how important pop-up parks can be, they will demand that developers do more with unused space. Assemblyman Lentol is ready to help developers address these needs.

Assemblyman Lentol is pictured on a BMX bike at Havemeyer Park. This is exactly the type of new activity we need in the neighborhood to keep our youth active in productive ways.

\$19.5 million Greenpoint Environmental Fund to seek project proposals this fall

The Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund or “GCEF,” a new \$19.5 million grant program, will accept proposals for environmental improvement projects starting in fall 2013! The money comes from the settlement of the ExxonMobil oil spill litigation secured by the New York State Attorney General’s Office and the Department of Environmental Conservation. The fund is being jointly administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the North Brooklyn Development Corporation. The GCEF will fund projects that will result in significant environmental improvements in Greenpoint and address the community’s environmental improvement priorities, including water quality; groundwater; open space; toxic pollution and air quality. Funding will be available as “small grants” (\$5,000-\$25,000) and “large grants” (over \$25,000). Please join us for the community meeting on the GCEF on September 25, 2013 at the Warsaw, 261 Driggs Avenue, Brooklyn at 6:30 p.m. For more information on the community meeting or the GCEF in general, or to be placed on the mailing list for updates, send an email to gcefund@northbrooklyn.org or call 718-389-9044 extension 15.



Assemblyman Joseph Lentol is joined by Rich Mazur and Laura Treciokas of North Brooklyn Development Corporation, which is administering the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Teaching young adults crime safety tips

Remember to review with your intermediate, high school, and college age kids basic safety tips—to protect them from what is often referred to as “petty” crime or larcenies. If you have been a victim of a petty crime, you know it is never insignificant. Young adults traveling in the City independently for the first time can be easy prey if they are unaware of basic safety tips. Link to my webpage <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Joseph-R-Lentol/>, and click on “Publications” for tips you can use to review important safety rules.



Assemblyman Lentol enjoys meeting neighborhood families informally at local block parties. Pictured is Assemblyman Lentol during the Calyer Street block party in August.

Assemblyman Lentol is pictured enjoying Cooper Park’s family day activities with Julia Foster, President of the Tenants Association and other residents.



Assemblyman Lentol pushes groundbreaking home invasion legislation

Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol will reintroduce legislation this upcoming legislative session that will create a new section of the law addressing home invasions. The law will consist of three classes of felony home invasion—punishable by up to 7, 15, and 25 years in prison. This is a very innovative approach to dealing with home invasions, as people who commit this crime typically face less serious charges, such as robbery and assault.

Very few states legally define home invasion as a separate crime, requiring most prosecutors to utilize other laws, while none of them quite fit and certainly none of them reflect the gravity of the crime.

“There is a reason why invasions of the home dominate the news. There is a reason there are so many horror and suspense movies made with this theme. It’s playing on people’s worst fears,” said Assemblyman Lentol.

In light of recent crimes that have plagued the neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, and Fort Greene, home invasions should be treated differently, Lentol explained.

“Home invasions create a seriously volatile situation, as whole families are often present,” said Lentol. “People want to protect their families and as a result things can escalate quickly.”

Throughout history, the law has provided special recognition to the home as a special place with certain protections, such as laws requiring a search warrant before entering a home.



Assemblyman Lentol speaks to reporters after the serious destruction of property at McGolrick Park by vandals.

“I think we all know the phrase which I am modifying a bit, ‘a person’s home is his or her castle.’ It is the one place where a family should always feel safe,” Lentol noted. “Hopefully this legislation will act as yet another deterrent for criminals.”

Due to the undefined nature of home invasions on the federal level, reporting on the crime is very limited. The most recent data are from 2003 to 2007. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, an estimated 3.7 million household burglaries occurred each year during this time period. In about 28% of these burglaries, a household member was present. In 7% of all household burglaries, a family member experienced violent victimization.

“We want people and criminals to start seeing this as a separate crime, not just a burglary gone wrong. Criminals should think long and hard about whether someone might be home before they break in because the consequences could be formidable,” he concluded.



Assemblyman Joe Lentol joins members of the 94th Precinct Community Council and 94th Precinct Captain James Ryan at the annual Night Out Against Crime.



Assemblyman **Joseph R. LENTOL**

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Securing your home from burglaries:

- Always lock your entry doors/windows when leaving home. Even if leaving for only a moment.
- Install high-security locks on all entry doors.
- Never place an air conditioner in a fire escape window.
NYC Fire Department-approved gates are your best protection for fire escape-accessible windows.
- Never buzz strangers into buildings.
- Properly installed interlocking edgeguards (anti-Jimmy bars) can offer good protection.
- Ensure roof hatch/door is secured if you live on a top floor.
- An alarm system can offer added security.
- Do not leave windows wide open giving strangers a view of your home, its layout, and your valuables.