



News from the Neighborhood

New York State Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol

Spring 2015



Assemblyman Lentol joined residents of North Brooklyn in calling on Mayor de Blasio to keep the City of New York's promise in completing Bushwick Inlet Park.

Mayor de Blasio! Give Us Our Park As We Were Promised

In large national parks, fires keep the ecosystem alive. In the case of Bushwick Inlet Park, fire might be what brings the park to life. In late-January, a fire at the CitiStorage facility on North Brooklyn's waterfront leveled a commercial warehouse on a parcel of land designated by the City in 2005 to become part of Bushwick Inlet Park. Now is the time for Mayor de Blasio to acquire this land and fulfill the City's decade-long promise.

In the 19th century, Frederick Law Olmstead and other similar visionaries understood the importance of parks in urban centers as necessities, not amenities. In New York City, the benefits that parks provide are never-ending. They provide more than just individual health or environmental enhancement.

Parks build and connect communities in the most positive of ways. Residents meet for everything from the celebration of life to the commemoration of death. Parks are community destinations where you get a glimpse of all the world's cultures right in your own neighborhood, promoting unity and understanding.

Perhaps most important in North Brooklyn, parks are critical relief valves for people who live too close together. Being able to get out of an overcrowded apartment as a way to ease tensions caused by

living in close quarters is valuable beyond measure. In this way, parks help keep our City's families stable and safe.

In North Brooklyn, prior to the rezoning in 2005, the area consisted of predominantly low-level multi-family homes. Many of these homes had backyards as open space. But now, a large number of these homes no longer exist. One of the consequences of the rezoning was that traditional homes have slowly but surely been torn down and replaced with high rise condominium buildings offering virtually no outdoor space—except a few roof top gardens reserved only for the building's occupants. And, over the next several years, more than 1,000 units of affordable housing—primarily in high rise buildings—are slated to be built in North Brooklyn.

What kind of quality of life will these tenants have without park space?

The City of New York realized that rezoning the area would increase density and cause problems. That is why it assured the community during negotiations that additional open space—one of the most important being Bushwick Inlet Park—was part of the deal. While some parcels of land have been purchased over the years, the opportunity to obtain the most important piece is here right now. Mayor de Blasio cannot let this opportunity pass because it surely will not come again.

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First Ever Common Core Program on Teen Dating Violence Prevention Launches

In February, I helped launch the Jessica Tush Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program named after a Staten Island teenager who was slain as the result of dating violence. The program was piloted at Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design.

The Jessica Tush Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program will involve 12 students who will undergo a three month training program offered by Day One, a youth dating violence advocacy group, with the help of TOGETHER, a youth and police empowerment

program. The 12 students will formulate what they learned into a curriculum and video series, all in accordance with Common Core Standards. The curriculum and video series will then be taught to all 9th grade classes. Day One will also provide professional development for all teachers, counselors, and administrators. The goal of the program is to make students and teachers aware of how to recognize and prevent teen dating violence, and how to intervene when necessary.



The students of P.S. 132's Class 5-304 and their teacher, Ms. Dana Ferrara, visited Assemblyman Lentol at his district office for their 100th Day of School. The students asked Assemblyman Lentol incredibly smart questions including, what do lawmakers do and what they could do to as students to become more involved in their community.



Assemblyman Lentol visited P.S. 157 students with Henry Cross of Hosh Yoga and joined them as they participated in a yoga class.

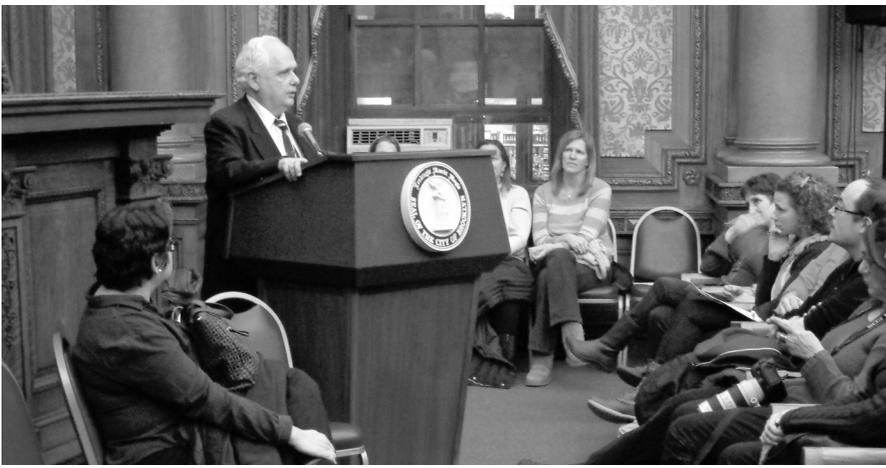
Update on Swinging 60s Senior Center and Small World Day Care Center

The Swinging 60s Senior Center and Small World Day Care Center has been fighting to stay open since it was hit with a Scrooge-like eviction notice at Christmas time in 2013. The building was sold to a new landlord who intended to tear it down and turn it into a luxury residential building. Since then, the Conselyea Street Block Association, which runs the center, has been fighting the landlord in court to prevent the closure.

The City of New York built the center in 1974 and then immediately sold the property to the prior landlord with the understanding that the center would be forever used as a senior center and day care. When the 2013 sale occurred, neither the new nor old landlord alerted the City or the Conselyea Street Block Association, thus denying them the right of first refusal to purchase the building.

A new development came on May 5th when the presiding judge indicated he would consider nullifying the sale to the current landlord, which would then allow for the Conselyea Street Block Association to purchase the property and save the center. A final judgment has not been made yet. The next court date is set for June 8th.

The Swinging 60s Senior Center and Small World Day Care Center, jointly located at 211 Ainslie Street, have been in operation since 1974. Over 100 seniors visit the center every day, with 90 preschoolers and 70 after-school students served by the day care. The center also provides 40 jobs to the community.



Assemblyman Lentol attended a United Federation of Teachers forum on the Governor's budget proposal at Brooklyn Borough Hall. Over 200 parents, teachers, and students called on the Governor to support public schools. Assemblyman Lentol addressed their concerns by explaining how the budget process works and promised to fight for public schools in the budget negotiations.

Putting Women and Families First

I am supporting a series of bills promoting women's equality and economic security for all New Yorkers. The legislation—which continues the Assembly Majority's comprehensive Families First agenda—increases the minimum wage, expands access to quality, affordable child care, and combats discrimination.

As more women become the primary breadwinner in their household, it's time we raise the minimum wage to ensure women have the earning power to provide for their families.

Nearly 60 percent of minimum wage workers in New York State are women, while nearly 40 percent of families with a female head of household in New York live in poverty.

And the percentage of households with children that have mothers as either the sole or primary source of income has risen substantially in recent decades, now reaching 40 percent.

In an effort to boost household incomes, the Assembly will pass legislation to increase the state minimum wage to \$10.50 per hour beginning Dec. 31, 2016, and to \$12.60 per hour on Dec. 31, 2018. The proposal would also create a minimum wage for New York City, Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties of \$12.50 per hour to begin Dec. 31, 2016, increasing to \$15.00 per hour starting Dec. 31, 2018. The state tipped wage would increase to \$8.75 per hour – \$10.40 per hour for New York City, Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties – beginning Dec. 31, 2016. It would then increase again to \$10.50 per hour – \$12.50 per hour for New York City, Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties – on Dec. 31, 2018. Further, the state minimum wage and tipped wage would be indexed to the rate of inflation beginning in 2019.

In one of the wealthiest countries in the world, those who work full time should never have to live in poverty. An inadequate minimum wage leaves far too many New Yorkers—many of them women and the heads of households—struggling to make ends meet. Now is the time to raise the minimum wage, because when women succeed, we all succeed.

Fighting discrimination

New York State is a progressive leader committed to breaking down barriers. When it comes to women's rights, we still have work to do. No one should ever be discriminated against on the basis of gender.

Currently, New York State law only prohibits sexual harassment in workplaces with four or more employees. The Assembly's legislation would protect all employees by banning sexual harassment in every workplace, regardless of the number of employees (A.5360).

Unfortunately, women are also all too often discriminated against based on their family status. The Assembly's legislation would prohibit employers, employment agencies, and other organizations from denying work or promotions to employees simply because they are parents. The Assembly Majority does not believe New Yorkers should be punished for choosing to be parents.

The Assembly is also taking up a bill that would require employers to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant

employees. Pregnancy can require slight modifications in an employee's work schedule, responsibilities, and physical work environment and every effort should be made to accommodate women during this time.

Further, the Families First agenda includes legislation to allow successful plaintiffs who have been victimized based on their gender to recover attorney fees in employment or credit discrimination cases. Currently, plaintiffs can only recover attorney fees at trial for housing discrimination cases, dissuading many women from bringing employment or credit cases, and making it costly if they do. This bill would also authorize the recovery of attorney fees in housing-related credit discrimination cases.

When women are empowered and treated equally, our families have brighter futures, our communities are stronger and New York State is more prosperous.

Increasing access to affordable child care

With the cost of child care rising at an alarming rate, many women are forced to quit their jobs to care for their children. We must work to keep child care affordable so women don't have to choose between providing for their families and caring for their children.

Child care in New York State averages nearly \$15,000 per year. Two-parent families spend almost 17% of their annual income on child care—the second-highest cost in the nation—while single-parent households in New York State spend nearly 50% of their yearly income on child care. Following the recommendations of the Assembly's Child Care Work Group, the 2015-16 state budget includes nearly \$34 million to improve our child care system and ensure more families have access to the quality, affordable child care they deserve.

Additionally, the Assembly will pass legislation allowing a 12-month work exemption for households receiving public assistance with a child under the age of 1, provided that the commissioner of a social services district is unable to provide all eligible working families with child care assistance. Additional legislation would require local social services districts to provide a child care subsidy to eligible parents who work overnight so the child can be cared for during the day if not in school.

The Assembly is also taking up legislation that would establish child care as a compelling family reason to voluntarily separate from employment, allowing parents to be eligible for unemployment benefits. Further, the Assembly's legislation includes a bill that would require the state Department of Labor to take child care needs into account when considering unemployment work search requirements.

The Assembly Majority understands the struggles that New Yorkers face every day. We will always fight for the support and protections that we know will make this a better state for all of our families.

