



# Community Newsletter

## ASSEMBLY MEMBER DANIEL O'DONNELL

Manhattan Valley ■ Morningside Heights  
Upper West Side ■ West Harlem

FALL 2013

■ SERVING NEW YORK'S 69<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT ■

Dear Neighbor,

The leaves have yet to turn, but with Labor Day behind us and the city's schools filling with students, it is clearly time to transition into fall. After a busy summer in the community, I am turning my focus once again to my legislative work and beginning to develop the bills I will introduce and advocate for when the Assembly returns to session. As the only Manhattan member of the Assembly Education Committee, I am paying special attention to education bills that will support students throughout Manhattan and New York State, in addition to those in my own Assembly District.

This month, my newsletter summarizes some of the Assembly's work this year, which includes championing women's rights, labor rights, and gun control, among other things. See the article on the right side of this page for more details.

In honor of the season, the newsletter will also feature a few pieces about education, from an article on the education bills I championed this year, to some important dates and events for families to keep in mind, and an update on my spring Community Reading Challenge.

During my first full session as Chair of the Correction Committee, I've visited four correctional facilities, with plans to visit more, and introduced a number of bills to reduce recidivism rates, improve care for mentally ill inmates, and protect inmates' rights during legal proceedings. For more details on New York State's prison system and my efforts to improve it, refer to the article later in this newsletter.

Returning to our community, my summer Health Fair, hosted in conjunction with the Grant Houses' Family Day, was once again a popular event. Constituents joined us to receive free health information and health screenings from more than a dozen providers, as well as a number of free gym passes and raffled giftcards to local restaurants. My fall Health Fair, hosted with the Children's Aid Society, will be held on November 9th. Please look for more information later in this newsletter and in future updates from me.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and useful. My staff and I are always available to assist you in my Community Office located at 245 W. 104th Street, just off Broadway, or by phone at (212) 866-3970. I encourage you to call, write, or visit us, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM. For those with specific housing problems, I have a dedicated housing specialist on staff available to help every day.

Finally, if you would like to receive more frequent (monthly) updates from me, that include information about community events, programs, and services, please send an email with the subject "subscribe" to [odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us).

Very truly yours,

*Daniel O'Donnell*



Assembly Member O'Donnell debating the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) on the Assembly floor. To watch video of O'Donnell's speech, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIrnveXLsKY>.

## Assembly passes Women's Equality Agenda and other crucial progressive legislation

Assembly Member O'Donnell is proud to have supported the Assembly's efforts this year to promote a wide array of progressive issues, including women's rights, labor rights, unemployment benefits, gun control, and many others.

The Women's Equality Agenda included provisions to promote equal pay, combat sexual harassment, increase penalties for human trafficking and protections for victims of domestic violence, and strengthen women's health and reproductive rights under New York law. It passed the Assembly easily, and O'Donnell was proud to vote in favor of it. Unfortunately, the State Senate refused to pass the full bill because of its reproductive health portion, and as the Assembly was unwilling to compromise when it comes to every woman's right to make decisions about her own body, no bill passed both houses. Similarly, the Assembly passed the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) for the seventh time this year, but the Senate has yet to pass it.

During this year's budget process, the Assembly stood up for another often-marginalized group: individuals with disabilities. The Assembly successfully advocated for the full restoration of \$90 million to the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), funding that had been cut earlier in the budget process. OPWDD provides indispensable care and support to one of New York's most vulnerable populations, and the restored funding will ensure that they continue to offer the same high caliber of services to many individuals and families across the state.

Also included in the budget were increases in the Unemployment Insurance Fund to restore its solvency and provide increased benefits for those New Yorkers still suffering from the depressed economy. Workers injured on the job will now receive a minimum worker compensation benefit of \$150 per week, increased from \$100. The general weekly benefit will gradually increase from \$405 to 50% of the state's average weekly wage by October 1, 2026.

Finally, early in the year the Assembly helped pass one of the most highly debated laws this session, the New York SAFE Act (Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act). The SAFE Act enacted such common-sense measures as banning military-style assault weapons, ensuring all gun purchases are subject to a background check, keeping guns away from convicted felons and out of the hands of those who pose a danger due to mental illness, and toughening criminal penalties on those who use illegal guns. Assembly Member O'Donnell was proud to vote in favor of the most comprehensive gun safety law in the country, and stand up for safer, more lawful communities across New York.

With this year's efforts the New York State Assembly has fought to make New York a safer, more prosperous place for all its residents, and O'Donnell plans to continue those efforts when he returns to Albany for the 2014 Legislative Session.





Assembly Member O'Donnell (right), speaking to overjoyed New Yorkers celebrating on June 26, 2013, the day the Supreme Court declared Article 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional. His husband John Banta (left), joined him for the momentous occasion.

Photo: Donna Aceto for Gay City News.

## TENANT'S CORNER:

### Your Right to a Roommate

In these difficult economic times, living with a roommate can sometimes help tenants make their monthly rent. A roommate is someone who is unrelated to the tenant whose name appears on the lease (called the "tenant of record" under rent control), who pays rent and lives with the tenant. However, some of the rules regarding roommates are complicated.

Under New York State's roommate law (New York State Real Property Law, Section 235-f), rent-stabilized tenants can charge their roommates no more than a proportionate share of the rent. This means that if two people are sharing a two bedroom apartment, the tenant is only allowed to charge the roommate half the rent. This limitation does not apply to rent-controlled tenants—they are allowed to charge a roommate up to, but not more than, the full amount of the legal rent.

Additionally, the number of roommates a tenant is allowed to have varies based on many different factors, which are too numerous to include here. One common example is for tenants who live alone: they are allowed to have one roommate, as well as the roommate's dependent children.

The automatic right to a roommate does not extend to those who reside in public housing. Tenants who receive any type of rent subsidy or reside in public housing should consult with their landlord or the management office before getting a roommate.

Rent-stabilized and rent-controlled tenants whose rents are approaching or above \$2,500 should consider the law regarding high-income deregulation before inviting someone to live with them. This law states that if the household income is \$200,000 or more, and the rent is above \$2,500, the landlord can apply to the state to deregulate the apartment.

If you are considering sharing your apartment with someone and would like further information or guidance on this subject, please contact Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office at (212) 866-3970.

## Upcoming education events & deadlines

### Thu, September 26, 6:00-7:00 pm:

Homework Strategies Workshop (Joan of Arc Complex, 154 W 93rd St - btw. Amsterdam & Columbus Avenue).

### Sat & Sun, September 28 & 29, 10:00-

3:00 pm: Citywide High School Fair at Brooklyn Technical High School (29 Fort Greene Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217 - btw. Fulton & DeKalb).

### Tues, October 8, 5:30-7:30pm:

Community School District 3 (CSD3) Middle School Fair at P.S. 163 (163 W. 97th Street - btw. Amsterdam & Columbus Avenue).

### Sat & Sun, October 19 & 20, 11:00-

2:00pm: Borough High School Fairs Location TBD - <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Calendar/default.htm>.

**Sat & Sun, October 26 & 27:** Specialized High Schools Admissions Test for current 8th graders. For testing sites and more information, download the Specialized High School Handbook PDF here: <http://tinyurl.com/SpecializedHS>.

### Tues, October 29, 6:00-8:00pm:

CSD3 Middle School Principals Forum at P.S. 76 (220 W 121st Street - btw. Eighth Avenue & Adam Clayton Powell Jr Blvd).

**Sat, November 2:** Specialized High Schools Admissions Test for current 9th graders, and 8th and 9th grade students with special needs. Download the handbook (link at left) for more information.

### Sat, November 2, 10:00am-1:00pm:

CSD3 Elementary School Fair at P.S./M.S. 165 (234 W. 109th Street - btw. Broadway & Amsterdam Avenue).

### Tues, November 12, 6:00-7:30pm:

CSD3 Workshop on Common Core Standards. Contact D.J. Sheppard at (212) 678-5857 for more info.

**Sun, November 17:** Specialized High Schools Admissions Test Make-up test. By permission only.

### Mon, December 2:

High School Application Deadline.

## O'Donnell's successful first year as correction committee chair

As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Correction, Assembly Member O'Donnell continues to work to pass progressive and common-sense legislation for the benefit of our citizens and correctional system. Tapped in January to lead the Committee, Assembly Member O'Donnell's experience as a public defender and commitment to our most vulnerable citizens makes him well equipped to work with and reform the nation's third-largest prison system.

In his first full session as Chair of the Committee on Correction, Assembly Member O'Donnell visited four correctional facilities: Bedford Hills, Coxsackie, Fishkill, and Riker's Island.

While visiting facilities, Assembly Member O'Donnell and the Corrections staff spoke with inmates and employees to determine their needs and possible improvements. O'Donnell visited classrooms, libraries, and vocational workshops, and toured all areas of each facility, including the Special Housing Units. Based on his visits and conversations, O'Donnell remains committed to strengthening the beneficial programs in our prisons, including GED and college credit courses, inmate hospice care, and job skills training.

Assembly Member O'Donnell is the proud sponsor of numerous bills designed to promote the rehabilitation of inmates and improve the operation of New York's correctional system. In his short time as Chair, he has already passed multiple bills, such as A6531, which ensures that inmates are receiving the rights to which they are entitled during legal proceedings; A7970, which further defines the duties of the parole board staff; and A4583, which relates to the safety of mentally ill inmates. Furthermore, O'Donnell is the sponsor of bills to improve staffing and budget proceedings at correctional facilities, as well as to expand the prison work release program, geriatric parole, and medical parole.

O'Donnell looks forward to continuing to use his position to encourage the proper rehabilitation and education of the prison population. This effort is vital to the reduction of recidivism and to give those who have been incarcerated the tools they need to become self-sufficient and crime-free. He aims to continue this progressive legislative agenda during the coming Assembly session and to continue to improve our state's prison system.

## Public scoping meeting regarding JHL plan to construct nursing home on W. 97<sup>th</sup> St.

Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>,  
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

On Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., there will be an opportunity for all interested parties to comment on the scope of the Department of Health's Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding Jewish Home Lifecare's controversial proposal to build a new nursing home adjacent to P.S. 163. This meeting will be held at P.S. 163 at 163 W. 97<sup>th</sup> Street. If you are unable to attend but would like to submit testimony, **written comments may be sent to:** Mr. Charles P. Abel, Acting Director, Division of Health Facility Planning, New York State Department of Health, Room 1805, Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York 12237, or by email to [dhfpdivoffice@health.state.ny.us](mailto:dhfpdivoffice@health.state.ny.us). Comments will be accepted for a period of ten calendar days following the close of the Public Scoping Meeting.

## Assembly Member O'Donnell's Upcoming FREE Legal Clinics

For constituents who need help with legal issues but are unable to come to Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office during the workday, Assembly Member O'Donnell hosts a monthly evening opportunity for constituents to consult with a volunteer attorney.

Call **Joyce** at **(212) 866-3970** to make an appointment.

Upcoming clinic dates:

Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> • Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> • Nov. 21<sup>st</sup> • Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>

## Internships Available

Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office is accepting applications for the fall internship program from individuals who are high school age or older. To apply, please fax or email a cover letter and resume to **(212) 864-1095** or [wilsonc@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:wilsonc@assembly.state.ny.us).

For more information, please call **(212) 866-3970** and ask for **Callie**.

## E-Newsletters

Do you want more frequent updates about interesting community events, important government information, and what Assembly Member O'Donnell has been working on? Sign up to receive his monthly electronic newsletters by sending an email to [odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us).

### Daniel O'Donnell's Community Newsletter

Assembly Member ■ 69<sup>th</sup> District  
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#### COMMUNITY OFFICE INFORMATION:

Open Monday through Friday  
9:00 AM - 5:30 PM  
(212) 866-3970  
[odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us)

## Community Health Service Day at Grant Houses

Assembly Member O'Donnell's 10th Annual Community Health Service Day at Grant Houses was a great success this year! Attending groups provided information on a wide variety of health-related topics, including eye health, diabetes, and health insurance options. They also provided free screenings for foot health, Hepatitis C, HIV, and blood pressure. Over 100 community members were able to take advantage of these opportunities.

Thanks to everyone who came out and to all the groups who sent representatives to share their information or services with the community! A special thanks to **Amsterdam Restaurant** and **Toast Uptown** for donating gift cards to the Health Fair raffle, to **SELF Magazine** for donating issues of their publication, and to **Lucille Roberts Women's Fitness** for donating free guest passes. If you were unable to take advantage of the information and services offered by these great organizations, come to Assembly Member O'Donnell's fall Community Health Fair at the Frederick Douglass Houses on **Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>!**

## ¡Atención!

La oficina de la comunidad del asambleísta O'Donnell tiene disponible empleados que hablan español para asistir al público tiempo completo, lunes a viernes de 9:00 AM a 5:30 PM. La oficina está localizada en el 245 West 104<sup>th</sup> Street, cerca de Broadway. También pueden llamar a la oficina en horas laborales al (212) 866-3970.

Recuerden que nuestro boletín informativo está disponible en español. Para obtener una copia favor de comunicarse con la oficina del asambleísta Daniel O'Donnell.