



Assemblyman
**HERMAN D.
FARRELL, JR.**

*Reports to the People
of the
71st Assembly District*

Fall 2013

ASSEMBLYMAN FARRELL JOINS ASSEMBLY RAFT TEAM IN ADIRONDACK CHALLENGE

In late July, I traveled to the Adirondacks and competed in the Assembly raft for a three-mile rafting competition challenging Gov. Andrew Cuomo, legislative leaders and even reporters in the first “Adirondack Challenge” promoting tourism in northern New York.

It was really a lot of fun. I didn’t realize I could do that. In fact, I thought I was going to get thrown out of the boat the first time we hit a big deep hole. But we all survived, mostly because the female Assembly Members on our team did most of the work! (*see photo at right*)

As was mentioned above, Governor Cuomo invited us to take part in this publicity event in order to promote this beautiful, remote and largely untouched area as a tourist destination. It was interesting that our current Governor would choose a river as the focal point of this event.

You may recall that the current Governor’s father, former Gov. Mario Cuomo, did a lot to draw people to the Hudson River decades ago when he agreed to fund construction of Riverbank State Park on top of Northern Manhattan’s sewage treatment plant. This was done to offset the effects that could be associated with having a facility like this in our community. Thankfully, the finished product turned out to be a wonderful addition to Northern Manhattan.



ASSEMBLYMAN FARRELL’S COMMUNITY OFFICE INFORMATION



I maintain full-time bilingual offices to serve you.
If you need my help, you may contact me at any of my offices.

2541-55 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Blvd. • 212-234-1430
Monday – Friday: 10 a.m. until 5 p.m.

751 W. 183rd St. • 212-568-2828
Monday – Friday: 10 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Rm. 923 Legislative Office Bldg., Albany, NY 12248 • 518-455-5491
www.assembly.state.ny.us • Farrellh@assembly.state.ny.us

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET RESTORATION FOR NEW YORKERS WITH DISABILITIES BECOMES LAW

Dear Neighbor,

I hope that you enjoyed your summer, and that you and your family enjoy the holiday season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Since the 2013 Legislative Session ended in June, things have been very busy and quite a lot has been done. If you happen to serve on one of the Community Boards in the District or are a frequent visitor to my Assembly Web site, which you may find at www.assembly.state.ny.us, you may be aware of some of the issues that I have been dealing with and will be discussed in this newsletter. If not, please read on for a rundown of what I have been doing for our District and the people of this State.

Perhaps the most exciting news is that a project I have been working on for many years could come to pass as early as 2015. Since the 1980s, I have been speaking out about the lack of accessibility to our public parks. People whose mobility is compromised, as well as bicyclists, roller skaters and parents pushing a baby carriage are often shut out of our parks. This is not acceptable.

In 1996, I unveiled a plan to build a pedestrian bridge into Fort Washington Park at 165th Street over the rail lines and the highway. It was later decided that this bridge would be better placed at 151st Street. Unfortunately, even though I was able to allocate money to pay for the project, it never moved forward because Amtrak and the City's Art Council made requests that would have raised the costs of the project, busting the budget and making the project too expensive.

Earlier this year, the Legislature struck a deal for road and bridge funding with Governor Cuomo. As part of this deal, I was able to get our District \$20 million to pay for construction of this bridge. We hope that the project will be approved soon so that all may have full enjoyment of our beautiful public spaces. I have been meeting with the City's Parks Department and the State Department of Transportation to lay the groundwork for the bridge project, and we hope the groundbreaking will occur in 2015.

I am also involved in an ongoing effort to fix problems at Riverbank State Park and at the sewage treatment facility below it. As you may know if you have visited the Park recently, there have been problems with mosquitoes and sewage odor in the park. It appears that the rainwater drainage system in the Park may not be working properly, which allows pools of standing water to collect. These pools of stagnant water become nurseries for mosquitoes. This can be a problem because mosquitoes can carry diseases including the West Nile Virus.

These water problems may also be affecting parts of the treatment plant below. It has always been unclear who is responsible for making repairs in cases like this. I have been meeting with the State Parks Department and the State Department of Environmental Conservation plus the Friends of Riverbank and other interested parties in order to work out a solution and get these problems fixed so that the community can continue to enjoy this wonderful Park.

Inside this newsletter, you will also find stories about what I have been doing since our 2013 Session ended, including a trip that my fellow lawmakers and I took upstate over the summer at Governor Cuomo's request to highlight tourism, my work on a new Commission that will help fiscally stressed municipalities solve their fiscal issues, and photos of the many wonderful summer events where I was able to speak with many of you about issues of concern in the community. I hope you have a happy and healthy holiday season.

Yours truly,



Herman D. Farrell, Jr.
Member of Assembly



A \$90 million restoration of funds for the State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), which was negotiated by the Legislature in April and passed in June, was signed into law by Governor Cuomo on October 1. In early October, I visited the United Cerebral Palsy of New York City day program at 251 West 154th Street to deliver the news the restoration had been made official.

Earlier in the year, after the Governor had already introduced his Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2013-2014, the Federal government dropped a budgetary bombshell on New York. Members of Congress claimed that New York State had over-billed the Federal government for years to fund OPWDD and other programs for New Yorkers with disabilities, to the tune of over \$1 billion, which Federal officials wanted back.

Office for People with Developmental Disabilities Funded

Faced with this unexpected, massive hole in the then-unfinished budget, the Governor negotiated a smaller cut of about \$500 million, which forced him to cut programs including OPWDD. Faced with a 6 percent cut to programs that help New Yorkers with disabilities, Assembly Member Harvey Weisenberg of Long Island (whose adult son is disabled) worked with our colleagues and fought to reverse the cuts and restore funding to programs for the disabled.

Legislature Fighting for New Yorkers with Disabilities

In April, as the budget took shape, the Legislature and the Governor agreed to find a way around some of the cuts to these important programs. A work group was created to find savings that would stop the need for OPWDD cuts. Their plan includes recovery of \$40 million through a series of audits, and additional savings in the amount of \$50 million will be identified.

The bill was signed into law by the Governor in October, making the restoration plan official.

151ST STREET PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE FUNDED BY STATE CAPITAL PLAN

I have long spoken out about the fact that not all of our public parks are fully accessible. As you may remember, I obtained State funding to build a handicapped-accessible ramp at 158th Street which was finished in 2007. In 1996, I unveiled a plan to construct a \$10 million pedestrian bridge at 165th Street and Riverside Drive over the highway and rail lines into Fort Washington Park. My plan met with resistance from the Art Council and Amtrak, and unfortunately the project never moved forward. This project may begin as early as 2014 under the terms of a larger capital project. You may see an artist's rendering of the bridge below.



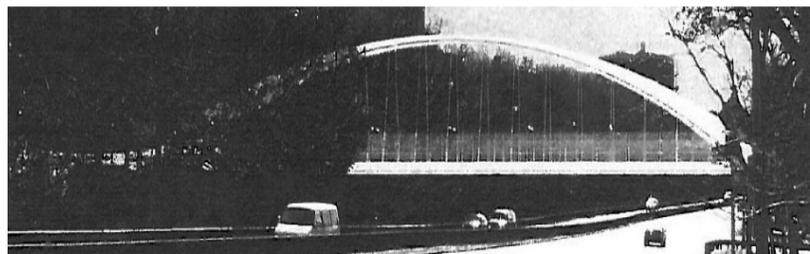
Assemblyman Farrell recently met with State Department of Transportation staff.

Groundbreaking Could Occur in 2015

Now, I can announce that under the terms of the capital project described below, \$20 million has been allocated to pay for a handicapped-accessible pedestrian bridge over the rail lines and Henry Hudson Parkway into Riverside Park at 151st Street. If this important project is approved quickly, it is anticipated that construction could go out to bid as early as March of 2015. When this project is complete, it will open up the Park to people whose mobility is compromised, bicyclists, skaters, parents pushing baby carriages and anyone else who is in need of accessibility. I eagerly await the opportunity to report future developments on this exciting and much-needed project.

My Assembly Ways and Means Committee staff recently delivered a report on the status of the State's two-year capital program for roads, bridges, highways and mass transit. We moved away from the traditional, five-year cycle several years ago to match the Federal funding cycle. As you may know, we are currently in the first year of a two-year cycle for road and bridge improvements. Earlier this year, representatives of the Assembly and Senate, along with the Governor, formalized the terms of a two-year agreement, which provides \$7.1 billion throughout the State for road and bridge work and other capital projects.

Specific to road and bridge work, \$3.3 billion is provided over two years under the terms of our agreement. \$1.26 billion of this amount has been allocated for projects within the five boroughs of New York City. \$400 million has been set aside for projects that must be completed quickly, with these projects having been identified as time-sensitive by members of the Legislature. It is from this source of funding that the 151st Street pedestrian bridge will be funded.



FARRELL APPOINTED TO GOV. CUOMO'S MUNICIPAL FINANCE BOARD

Assemblyman Farrell was appointed in September to Governor Cuomo's Financial Restructuring Board for Local Governments, which was created in June 2013 to help resolve municipalities' financial structural problems, resolve labor disputes and consider establishing shared services.

Other members of the Board include Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, Robert Megna, Director of the Governor's Division of Budget and Secretary of State Cesar Peralas. Also sitting on the Board are Senator Jack Martins and former Assembly Member Roann Destito, who is now Commissioner of the Office of General Services.

Help for Struggling Localities

As you may know, local governments across the State have long struggled with their finances, especially after the financial crash of 2008, and many have called out to the State for assistance. Governor Cuomo has said that cash bailouts will not be possible, but promised help will be made available to local governments to correct structural imbalances in their finances.

Panel to Offer Solutions, Aiding Local Government

In the near future, the Board will discuss and agree upon a set of recommendations that will be offered to fiscally eligible local governments who are seeking a way out of their problems. In some cases, grants or other incentives may be offered to local governments who accept and act upon these long-term recommendations.

Resolving Disputes in Labor Contracts

The board will also be empowered to sit at the negotiating table with local government leaders and leaders of municipal labor unions who are attempting to resolve disputes. The Board would serve as a binding arbitration panel, handing down just and reasonable resolutions. Please refer to frb.ny.gov for more details about our work.

DISCUSSING ISSUES OF CONCERN WITH HOMEOWNERS IN THE HAMILTON HEIGHTS COMMUNITY



MEET THE 2013 HERMAN D. FARRELL, JR. SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Every year, the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators gives each of its members \$2,000 that is generated during a winter fundraiser to pass along to hardworking students from our community in support of their educational goals. Please allow me to introduce one of the 2013 winners, Bria Ashley Grant, who is pictured here along with her father, Robert Grant, and mother Tara Jones. Also awarded scholarships this year were Claudine Derosi and Najzali Allen. Congratulations to all, and best of luck in their future endeavors.

A COUPLE OF SATURDAYS IN THE LIFE OF A LEGISLATOR

On several Saturdays during the summer, Assemblyman Farrell took advantage of the warm weather to visit with members of the community during a number of fun-filled events held that day at the 149th Street Block Association Block Party between 7 & 8 Aves, Pologrounds Houses Family Day at 8th Ave & 156th St, the "Jungle" Reunion Family Celebration Day at the "Jungle Tennis" Courts - Frederick Douglass Park, 151st St & 7th Ave in Harlem and other locations throughout the district. Denny met up with Councilwoman Inez Dickens who was attending the events. Also during the summer he competed in a whitewater rafting event upstate.

