

Assemblymember  
**Tony Simone**

Assembly District 75



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Dear friends,

As 2023 draws to a close, I'm reflecting on my first year as an elected official. It's been an incredible year: I have introduced 30 bills, six of which have passed in the Assembly, six passed in both houses and five have been signed into law by Governor Hochul. I am proud to co-sponsor over 300 bills that will improve the lives of New Yorkers. I have also spent this year working with the community here in District 75, engaging with constituents and attending neighborhood events. I am so proud to represent my friends and neighbors in Albany, and I can't wait to keep doing so in 2024.

Below you'll find a roundup of some of our work from this year. I want to thank my staff for their incredible work this past year. Matt, Yadira, Ben, Emma and Wendi are all steadfast public servants and I couldn't do this job without them.

As always, my office is here to help. If you are having an issue we can help with, or you would like to share a legislative idea with me, please call my office at (212) 807-7900 or email me at [simonet@nyassembly.gov](mailto:simonet@nyassembly.gov).

I hope you are having a wonderful holiday, and I look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Tony

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# ASSEMBLYMEMBER TONY SIMONE'S 2024 WRAP UP

**30**

**BILLS INTRODUCED**

**5**

**BILLS SIGNED INTO  
LAW**

**8**

**COMMUNITY  
EVENTS  
ORGANIZED**

**350+**

**COMMUNITY  
EVENTS ATTENDED**

**300+**

**BILLS SPONSORED**

**1000+**

**SCHOOL SUPPLIES  
& CLOTHING  
DONATED**

I am proud to report that this year my office has been all over the district, helping constituents and engaging with the community. We have helped resolve over 150 constituent issues ranging from housing problems, fraud cases, public safety concerns, and more. We also organized two giveaways this year; one which donated over 400 clothing items to asylum seekers in Assembly District 75, and a school supply donation drive, where we donated over 600 pieces of school supplies to a local elementary school. We have also organized events for the community, including a town hall, vaccine events, a drag story hour, informational sessions on 421a and Medicaid, and more. We attended community events all over the district, from litter clean ups,

community board, tenants' associations and block associations meetings to tree lightings and trick or treating. It's been an eventful year, and we'll keep the energy going in 2024!

## **Legislative Updates**

### Bills Passed and Signed Into Law:

Improving the System for People with Disabilities: My first bill signed into law was [A.2890](#), which advances disability justice by requiring the NY State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities to process applications for determining eligibility and service authorizations in an effective and timely manner, within 120 days. Over 120,000 New Yorkers are served by OPWDD. I hear from them all the time in our district. The difficulties they face navigating our society are burdensome enough. Ensuring accountability in the system that is meant to serve them, by preventing delays in eligibility determinations and service authorizations, is crucial and I'm glad I could deliver this much needed change.

Protecting Interns: The Assembly unanimously passed my bill, [A7355](#), to protect unpaid interns from discrimination based on gender identity or expression. Interns are vulnerable members of the workforce and ensuring they receive the same protections as all employees is critical to their safety and future success. The current Human Rights Law protects unpaid interns from unlawful discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics, marital status, or status as a victim of domestic violence.

Removing Stigmatizing and Outdated Language from New York State Law: New York has long held legal protections from discrimination and hate crimes for lesbian, gay and bisexual New Yorkers. Current law left at least one vestige of homophobia enshrined in state law, including language conflating homosexuality with criminality. This language was deeply harmful, and rooted in a time when states had laws on the books criminalizing consensual sexual acts between adults. The Assembly passed my bill [A.7367](#) which removes this language from the Human Rights law. This bill passed the State Senate thanks to sponsorship from Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal.

Protecting New York's Oceans: I passed [A.7440](#), to extend the Department of Environmental Conservation's authority to manage conservation of sharks, improving the DEC's ability to protect New York's ocean habitats and biodiversity. With ocean temperatures rising and threatening sea life, it's critical that we are monitoring changes to animal populations. This bill was sponsored in the Senate by Senator Iwen Chu.

Streamlining Nonprofit Administration: Nonprofits serve New Yorkers in so many ways and it is critical they are managed and use their resources as efficiently as possible. Legislation I passed, [A.6940](#), brings our law up to modern governance standards so organizations can focus more time on their mission and servicing communities, and less on red tape.



*Governor Hochul after signing my legislation removing homophobic language from state law as well as the Transgender Safe Haven Act!*

### **Veto of Pet Food Accountability Act**

I was greatly disappointed (as was Radar) by the Governor's vetoing of [A.7658](#), which I passed in the Assembly, and which would have regulated the labeling and marketing of pet food. Currently pet food is not legally required to meet the criteria for edible food, and is actually classified as animal feed. Without any regulations prohibiting this 'feed' from being labeled as "premium natural pet food" and using appealing pictures of food on the bag, pet owners are being kept in the dark and misled about what it is they are feeding their beloved companions. This bill would establish the "human food grade" designation which would allow pet owners to make informed decisions about what they are bringing into their homes and feeding their companions. A "human food grade" designation will clearly indicate that a food meets basic safety and quality standards used for human food, but was designed for the unique nutritional needs of pets. I will continue to negotiate with the Governor's office to achieve a law that allows people to make informed decisions about what they are feeding their pets.



*The Rev. Christine Lee met my best friend Radar at St. Peter's Chelsea for their annual Blessing of the Animals event! I passed the Pet Food Accountability Act to help Radar and all of our pets!*

Other Legislative Highlights

Reproductive Freedom: The attack on reproductive rights by conservative legislators and judges around the country was moved further into the extreme by [a ruling in Texas](#) by a Trump appointed right wing judge. Mifepristone is a safe drug that has been used for reproductive health for more than twenty years, and this judge's decision to suspend its FDA approval threw millions into uncertainty and fear as access to abortion continues to be restricted. This politically driven decision is another attempt to use conservative controlled courts to restrict health care, putting more lives at risk. New York will always remain a state where abortion is accessible, but we must go one step further to build capacity for the people who travel here from states where they cannot get the healthcare they need. To that end, I'm proud to join my colleague Assemblymember Gonzalez-Rojas as a co-sponsor on [A.361 the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Act](#). I also joined almost 600 fellow state legislators from around the country in a letter decrying this decision and making clear that abortion is health care and a human right. Governor Hochul has repeatedly expressed her commitment to protect access to medical abortion and has ordered the purchase of a five-year supply.

Health Equity for Retirees: Two years ago the City of New York began a move [to take away traditional Medicare from over 250,000 public employee retirees](#) and force them to enter a for-profit health network, a Medicare Advantage plan. This summer, a Manhattan Supreme Court Judge issued a ruling prohibiting the City from making the switch. I am strongly against the diminishment of anyone's healthcare, especially those who earned their benefits through a career of service to their city. I am proud to co-sponsor [the Health Equity for Retirees Act, A.7866](#), by my colleague Assemblymember Ken Zebrowski. I will continue to fight for greater comprehensive and affordable care for all and against any attempts to chip away at healthcare.

Birds and Bees Protection Act: The Governor has signed [the Birds and Bees Protection Act](#) to restrict the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, A.7640, introduced by Assemblymember Glick. These widely used pesticides are toxic for birds, bees and other pollinating insects as well as people. [They have been banned in Europe since 2018.](#)

Protecting the Hudson River: I worked with my Hudson Valley colleague, Assemblymember Dana Levenberg to pass her bill, [A.7208](#), which was signed by the Governor and makes it unlawful to discharge any radiological substance into the Hudson River in connection with the decommissioning of the Indian Point Nuclear Power plant. After years of cleaning up the toxic waste in the Hudson, I believe the river should be sparkling on the sun, not glowing in the dark. I'm exaggerating a bit, but I can't think of anything New Yorkers want less than radioactive waste dumped into the Hudson River. The discharge of nuclear waste into the Hudson poses a substantial risk to the local economy and quite likely the health of the area's communities. Because the Hudson is tidal up to Kingston and flows both north and south, the downstream impacts of radiological waste down the Hudson to the harbor are something we should all be concerned about.

Local Involvement in Community Healthcare Act: I was proud to vote for this bill from my colleague Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, [A.1633](#), which ensures that the public receives advance notice and an opportunity to be heard at a public forum if a hospital is closing, or a critical unit such as an emergency or maternity department is being lost. The bill also ensures that the NYS health department conducts a review before a hospital or major department is

closed. This will increase patient safety and transparency while giving communities a voice in their healthcare options.

Helping Student Loan Borrowers: There are 2.5 million New Yorkers with student loan debt who collectively owe almost \$100 billion. To help ease the burden of student loans, I introduced legislation with State Senator Nathalia Fernandez, [A.6109/S.4436](#), to establish a state level student loan interest deduction for middle income filers, both single and joint, who currently are unable to benefit from the federal deduction. Relieving the burden faced by student loan borrowers helps lift us all and will bring immediate economic benefits.

Defending Transgender Students: I have re-introduced a critical bill, [A.4576](#), to help ensure school is a safe and respectful environment for students. Transgender and gender non-conforming students experiencing victimization due to their gender expression are almost three times as likely to have missed school in a given month, had lower GPAs than students who experienced less harassment, and [experienced lower self-esteem and higher incidences of depression and suicidal ideation](#). This legislation will codify a requirement that school districts have procedures and policies in place to ensure that they treat students consistently with their gender identity or expression, allow students to access sex-segregated facilities and activities consistent with their gender identity or expression, and protect the privacy of data related to students' transgender or gender nonconforming status. Policies like this are important to help guide school districts towards best practices for creating a safe, healthy learning environment for all students.

Strengthening Democracy: The Assembly passed a package of bills to empower voters and strengthen New York's electoral system. The legislative package includes bills to crack down on "faithless" electors ([A.928](#)), increase participation by changing most local elections outside NYC to be held during even-numbered years ([A.4282-B](#)), make it easier to register to vote and receive early mail voting ballots ([A.6132-A](#) and [A.7632-A](#)), ensure ballots are counted properly ([A.7690](#)), and require ballot question language to be clear and easily understandable ([A.1722-B](#)).

Facial Recognition: I'm proud to sponsor [A.7625](#) with Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal which would prohibit the use of biometric surveillance in any place of public accommodation, such as stadiums, malls, and theaters. I joined Assemblymember Monica Wallace and other colleagues in a letter to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Education urging her to continue the existing prohibition on facial recognition technology in public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools in New York State.

LLC Transparency Act: We all know that bad landlords will try any tactic to cheat and take advantage of their tenants and workers, and shady LLC's have been a favorite for years. That's why my colleague, Assemblymember Emily Gallagher, passed [the LLC Transparency Act, A.3484](#), in our house this year, while Senator Hoylman-Sigal carried the bill through the Senate. I have been a strong supporter of this bill, which requires the beneficial owners of LLC's to identify themselves, making it possible to hold them accountable for their bad behavior. This fall,

we held a rally to urge Governor Hochul to sign the bill into law, and I am happy to say that as a result of our efforts she did sign the bill!

**New Protections for New Yorkers Affected by Lead-Based Paint:** Lead poisoning leads to a multitude of issues that can detrimentally impact a person throughout their lifetime. The most common cause of lead poisoning in children is the ingestion of lead paint from poorly maintained residential housing units. The Assembly passed legislation, [A.1687](#), to protect renters in New York who are exposed to lead-based paint by prohibiting the exclusion of coverage for losses or damages by exposure to lead-based paint from liability coverage provided to rental property owners.



*Rallying for the LLC Transparency Act with Senators Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Liz Krueger, as well as Assemblymembers Emily Gallagher, Karines Reyes, Alex Bores, and Marcela Mitaynes. We were joined by the New York City District Council of Carpenters and Reinvent Albany, a good-government watchdog group.*



## Solving the Housing Crisis

From day one, [I have been outspoken about the need for major housing reform in New York](#). I will be honest, progress on this front in Albany has been slow and frustrating. The pain of inaction will be felt across the state, from tenants struggling to stay in their homes, to young people seeking their first home, to seniors being able to afford living in their longtime communities.

I have fought hard to pass Good Cause Eviction legislation which will ban the monstrous rent increases so many of us have seen in recent years. Keeping tenants stable in their homes means stronger communities, healthy families and less homelessness.



*Rallying in Albany with hundreds of tenants and colleagues to pass Good Cause Eviction.*

We also must begin creating the affordable housing of tomorrow, because we needed it yesterday. There are so many available tools to increase the housing supply that we cannot just meet, but exceed demand and lower rent costs. I support [converting empty office buildings to residential](#), [legalizing basement apartments](#), [creating new incentives for deeper affordability levels](#), mandating development in the suburbs around commuter train stations, and making it easier to build small apartment buildings in all communities across the state. The west side has a long history of well thought solutions to create new affordable housing, [Community Board 4's housing plan](#) being the most recent, and bringing new tools from the State will allow our district to continue to be a model for the rest of New York on how to create significant new affordable housing to tackle the crisis. We don't have a moment to lose. It is a crisis we must solve so all New Yorkers can afford to live here and have a home.

### **A Grand 8th Avenue Entrance for Penn Station and Through-Running**

I joined Congressman Jerry Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, State Senators Liz Krueger and Brad Hoylman-Sigal, and Councilmember Erik Bottcher to call for the inclusion of a grand 8th Avenue entrance in the plans for a new Penn Station. The communities surrounding Penn have long felt our needs for the station have not been addressed. For too long all we heard about was commercial office development and not enough about the purpose of this important project: building a new Penn Station we can be proud of and that works for us. Penn Station should be a world-class transit hub; how can we fulfill that dream without multiple

grand entrances that bring the presence of Penn onto the street? An 8th Avenue entrance must be part of the next iteration of the station.



*Speaking to the press with Congressman Jerry Nadler, Councilmember Erik Bottcher, and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine outside Penn Station.*

I was joined by “Train Daddy” himself, Andy Byford, [at a public seminar to talk with the community about the option of “through-running” trains](#) as a big part of the solution for the overcrowding at Penn Station. Through-running stations are stations between two terminals. where trains come in from one direction, unload and load passengers, and continue on in the same direction, avoiding the inefficiency of terminal stations, which Penn generally functions as. In short, Penn can be a true regional hub where we can ride from Long Island to New Jersey without changing trains multiple times.

### **Supporting People with Serious Mental Illness**

Too many people living with serious mental illness (SMI) are stuck in a devastating cycle moving between hospitals, jails, and housing instability due to lack of community-based treatment. In 2021, over a third of people with SMI did not receive any form of mental health treatment. In New York City, a number of subway deaths have highlighted the need for access to intense and immediate mental health support. I was proud to join Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressmen Dan Goldman and Jerry Nadler to announce their bill, which would address this

problem by creating a new package of services under Medicaid specifically targeted to individuals living with SMI, setting a national standard for SMI care, and incentivizing states to provide intensive community-based services to treat SMI.



*Speaking on the need for greater funding for people with severe mental illnesses at Fountain House in Hell's Kitchen with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressman Jerry Nadler and State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal.*

## **In the Community**



*One of my happiest moments this year was representing Assembly District 75 at the Pride March. I am the first openly gay member to represent the historic neighborhoods of Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, and getting to hold my husband's hand while we marched at Pride was such a joy.*



*Educating bike riders on 9th Avenue alongside Pedestrians for Bike Safety, Deliveristas Unidos, State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Councilmember Erik Bottcher. This Summer, I introduced the Commercial E-Bike Licensing Act to require all delivery e-bikes and scooters be licensed while fining companies for bike violations on our sidewalks.*



*Rallying on the picket line with Assemblymember Deborah Glick, Councilmember Erik Bottcher, SAG-AFTRA workers, and organizers.*



*I held my first town hall meeting at Hartley House in Hell's Kitchen with over one hundred of our neighbors joining to discuss a wide range of issues.*



*Walking West 42nd Street with the NYPD during a public safety walkthrough organized by my office.*





*Surveying construction at Muhlenberg Library in Chelsea which is slated to reopen next year after HVAC improvements, elevator repairs, sidewalk improvements and a new fire alarm system.*

**In the News - In Case You Missed It!**



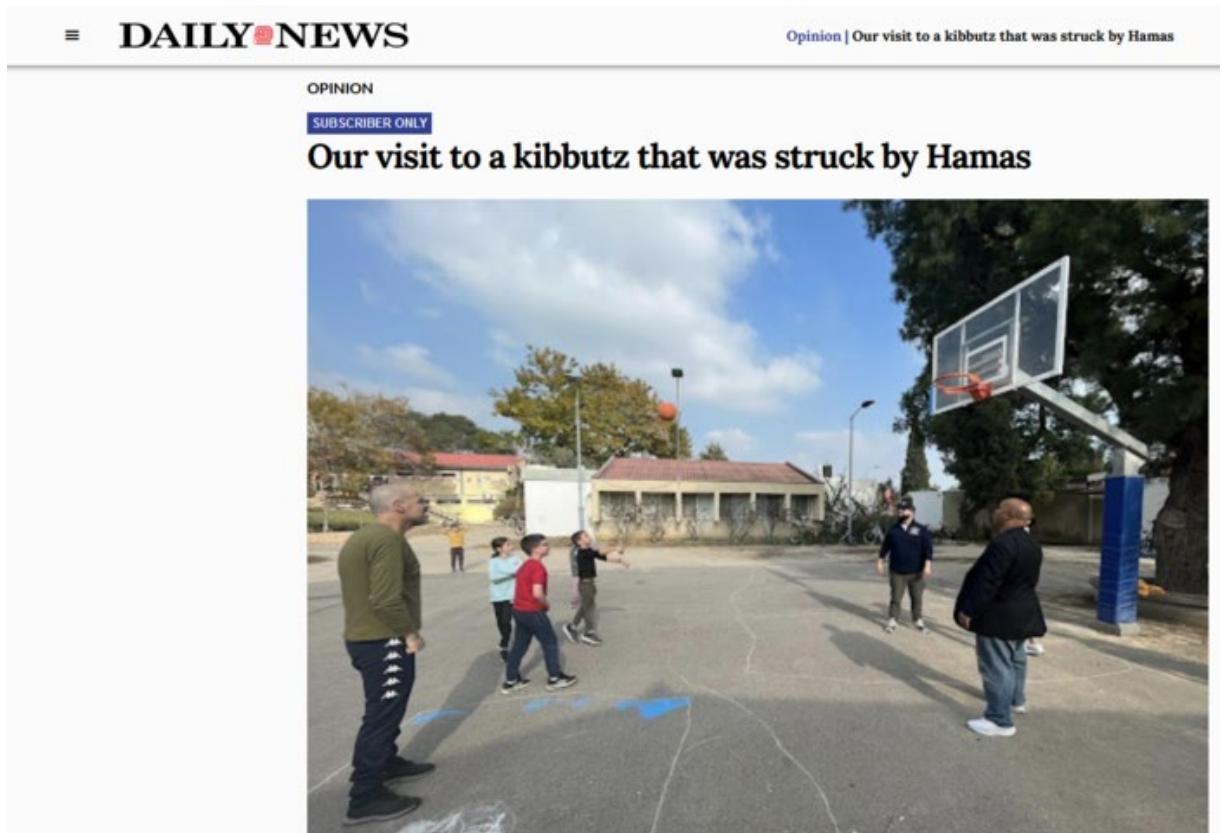
*[I was on NewsNight with Abby Phillip on CNN](#) to discuss the Rest Stop Restaurant Act, which protects consumers by making sure our rest stops serve the public seven days a week!*



*[I joined Good Day New York](#) to discuss the Commercial E-Bike Licensing Act, and making our streets safer for everyone!*



I shared my thoughts on 2023 and [my optimism for New York City with W42ST](#).



[I wrote an oped for the Daily News](#) with my colleagues, Assemblymembers Eddie Gibbs and Alex Bores, about our experience in Israel before the October 7th attack.



[Talking about the Safe Haven bill](#) with InFocus' Cheryl Willis.

MORE IN THE NEWS: Fighting for a better Penn Station was covered in [News12](#), [OurTown](#), [NY1](#), among others; and [the Daily News](#) published my op-ed with Senators Liz Krueger and Brad Hoylman-Sigal urging the City Council to rein MSG in with a short temporary permit that would bring the company to the table when negotiating the future of the station.