

Assemblyman

Jeffrey Dinowitz

Reports to the People of the 81st Assembly District

JUNE 2013

District Office: 3107 Kingsbridge Avenue, Bronx, New York 10463 • (718) 796-5345
Norwood Satellite Office: 3450 Dekalb Avenue, Bronx, New York 10467 • (718) 882-4000, ext. 353
Albany Office: 941 Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12248 • (518) 455-5965
Email: DinowitzJ@assembly.state.ny.us

Serving the communities of Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Norwood, Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield and Woodlawn

Dear Constituent:

As this newsletter is being mailed out we are headed towards the end of the legislative session. As chair of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Affairs and Protection, I am passing a number of strong consumer protection bills this legislative session (which I will talk about in a later mailing). We have accomplished a number of positive things in Albany this year, starting with the tougher gun control legislation, but there are still many important items on the agenda.

There are so many issues that must be addressed on every level of government. The future direction of our public schools will be a major part of the political debate this year. Women's rights legislation and campaign finance reform are at the top of the agenda in Albany for the end of the legislative session. Elected officials must actually produce results if they want to increase (or restore) the confidence of their constituents in government.

My staff and I are working to address countless community issues, large and small. We have applied to the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) for a new Neighborhood Slow Zone in the Norwood community. I was successful in convincing the DOT to designate part of central Riverdale as a Slow Zone. The new 20 mph speed signs have just been installed. The deal which community leader Andrew Cohen and I brokered in the Van Cortlandt Village area will keep open a house of worship and a senior center and provide 130 children with an early childhood program. These are just a few examples of my work in our district, but there is always much more to do.

If you need information or have any constituent problems please contact my district office. I would also like to hear from you if you want to express your opinion on an issue of concern. Also, my office provides free notary service.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz
Member of Assembly

A Win-Win-Win for Van Cortlandt Village

I recently announced an agreement that will save the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center (VCJC) and the Van Cortlandt Senior Center and bring 130 early childhood seats to the community. The Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) has signed a lease with the VCJC to use the second and third floors of the building at 3880 Sedgwick Avenue. The space in the upper floors of the VCJC had been rented for many years by the Department of Education (DOE) for kindergarten classes, but the DOE ended the relationship last June. The loss of rental income jeopardized the future of both the VCJC and the Senior Center. As a result of the agreement between the VCJC and MMCC, the VCJC will not have to close and learning opportunities for children are opened. In the agreement, eight large rooms will be converted to Head Start and Universal pre-K classrooms for two, three, and four-year-olds. Bathrooms will be renovated and a handicapped bathroom will be added. Also, a large rooftop area will be transformed into an early childhood play area with safety flooring and fencing. I secured the capital funding of \$345,000 to finance the renovations that will make the facility safe and appropriate for young children. The deal is a huge win for all three organizations and the entire community. Construction is slated to begin within the next couple of weeks and should be completed in time for the September 2013 school year.



Assemblyman Dinowitz is pictured with Community Leader Andrew Cohen; Robert Gilman, President of the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center; and Donald Bluestone, Executive Director of the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center. Assemblyman Dinowitz and Mr. Cohen arranged the deal to bring 130 early childhood seats to the top floors of the VCJC which will allow them, along with the Van Cortlandt Senior Center, to stay in business.

New Legislation to Fight for Utility Customers

When Superstorm Sandy tore through the city the response by the utility companies was, at best, inadequate. On Long Island the response by the Long Island Power Authority was so bad that the Governor is currently trying to restructure the entire company. For us here in the Bronx, the response wasn't quite as disastrous, but was still severely lacking. Our energy provider, Con Edison, left thousands of Northwest Bronx residents powerless for upwards of two weeks, while people living in Manhattan had their power restoration made a top priority.

Those who find this and other failings of the utility companies unfair generally have little recourse; complaints from customers only go so far. That is why, as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Affairs, I have introduced legislation, A.6239, which would create a new state consumer advocacy office called the State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate.

For too long the people of New York have been left without a voice and real representation when it comes to utility services. Currently more than 40 states and the District of Columbia have an independent state agency that represents the interests of residential utility customers. New York is one of the few, and by far the largest, without such an office.

Creating the State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate would give customers that voice by representing them in state and federal regulatory proceedings, as well as judicial review proceedings concerning rates and conditions of public service utilities. The office would be run by the Utility Consumer Advocate, who will serve a six-year term after appointment by the Governor. Unlike the Public Service Commission or the Utility Intervention Unit, the Utility Consumer Advocate would focus solely on consumers and their interests. I am hopeful that legislation creating this new office will pass the legislature and be signed into law by the Governor before the end of this coming session.

Norwood Slow Zone

The NYC Department of Transportation established the Neighborhood Slow Zone program a few years ago with the intention of increasing traffic safety and reducing the number of accidents in highly trafficked residential areas. I was the main sponsor of the slow zone that has been completed in the Riverdale section of my district in the vicinity of PS 24 and MS/HS 141.

I have been working with Community Board 7 and the Department of Transportation for years to improve traffic safety in the Norwood community. While many improvements have been made, there is still more work that needs to be done. That is why my colleague, Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, and I have applied for a Neighborhood Slow Zone in Norwood. This proposal, if approved, would reduce the speed limit to 20 miles per hour and

lead to the installation of more traffic safety measures in the community. The boundaries of the proposal include East Gun Hill Road to the north, Bainbridge Avenue and East 204th Street to the west and Webster Avenue to the east, with the southern boundary being where East 204th Street and Webster Avenue intersect.

Within this area are schools, houses of worship, the Williamsbridge Oval Park, the New York Public Library and other neighborhood institutions. This proposal is supported by Council Member Oliver Koppell, Community Board 7, the Moshulu Preservation Corporation, Montefiore Hospital, the Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval, the 52nd Precinct Community Council, St. Brendan's School and dozens of community residents.

Too Many Delays for the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center

The renovations of the Recreation Center at the Williamsbridge Oval are long overdue. This project has been delayed numerous times over the course of several years which has led to the Norwood community being shortchanged with each postponement. My office recently received notice that the construction is not scheduled to be finished until the end of the summer, another outrageous delay. I wrote a letter to the Parks Department detailing my displeasure with the lack of progress and demanding that the construction be completed before the summer. I have requested that the Parks Department provide my office with a detailed account of the work that is currently being completed through the remainder of the project.



Assemblyman Dinowitz spoke at a rally on the steps of City Hall protesting Mayor Bloomberg's outrageous comparison of the United Federation of Teachers to the National Rifle Association. The Mayor made this statement not long after the massacre in Newtown, Connecticut.

Assemblyman Dinowitz Helps Restore Hot Water at Fort Independence/Bailey Houses

I am pleased to announce that the Fort Independence/Bailey Houses – a 350-unit housing development in Kingsbridge which had been without hot water for several months – finally had their hot water recently restored. The lack of hot water for that long a period of time was ridiculous. Once notified about this concern, my office placed a complaint to NYCHA management and followed up on that request to ensure that they were aware of the problem. I also requested that NYCHA keep me apprised of any updates regarding the progress until the renovations were completed.

Alternate Side Sign Correction

My office received several complaints regarding parking tickets that were issued in front of 525 West 236 Street between Oxford Avenue and Cambridge Avenue. Alternate side parking signs along that block were mistakenly changed to indicate cleaning on both Mondays and Thursdays. Street cleaning at that location is supposed to be on Mondays only, because in Community Board 8 alternate side parking is in effect for one day a week on each side of the street. My office contacted the Department of Transportation. They inspected the area and acknowledged the confusion. Subsequently, the signs have been corrected.

Helping Our Neighbors

Old Income Tax Refund Check Reissued

A constituent came into our office with an income tax refund check that was over a decade old. She had tried to cash the check at her bank but, not surprisingly, was unable to do so. Our office contacted the Office of the New York State Comptroller and she was able to get her income tax refund check from over a decade ago reissued.

Verizon Lifeline Service Restored

A constituent reached out to our office on behalf of her elderly mother, also a constituent, whose Verizon Lifeline Service was wrongfully terminated. The constituent attempted to contact Verizon but was unable to get answers from the company. The service, available to qualifying Verizon senior customers, offers discounted phone calls and reduced rates on their monthly phone bill. My office contacted Verizon directly and explained the situation to them. Her Lifeline Service was reinstated shortly thereafter.

MetroCard Refunded

After a constituent added more funds to his MetroCard the MTA vending machine did not eject it. He called our office to assist him in getting back his MetroCard. Our office called the MTA to follow up on the constituent's letter to MetroCard Customer Claims. The MTA said they will expedite the process and produce the MetroCard for the constituent.

SNAP/Medicaid/MSP

A senior citizen's Medicaid was terminated through no fault of her own. We contacted the NYC HRA Medical Insurance & Community Services Administration and assisted her in having her Medicaid promptly reinstated.

My office has assisted several constituents enroll in the Medicare Savings Program (MSP), which provides financial assistance to seniors by providing a subsidy that pays their monthly Medicare premium. The program is a vital resource and many seniors in my district are not aware that they may qualify for the program.

In addition, we have helped several seniors apply for the NYC HRA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Many eligible constituents are unaware that they may qualify for the program. My office makes every effort to provide and help constituents determine what programs they are eligible for.

SCRIE/DRIE/Lease Renewals

My office regularly assists constituents in completing SCRIE and DRIE applications and renewal forms. We also help constituents with their rent stabilized lease renewals. In addition, my office has also provided assistance to constituents who needed information regarding their tenant rights and helped them address housing issues related to building and apartment repairs. We provide complaint forms to constituents who want to file complaints.



Assemblyman Dinowitz is shown here with his colleague, Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, officials, and members of AARP at the announcement of the introduction of his legislation that would create an independent utility consumer advocate office in New York State.



United States Senator Charles Schumer and Assemblyman Dinowitz discussed the Assemblyman's National Popular Vote legislation during the Senator's recent trip to Albany.

Albany Roundup: 2013-2014 State Budget Invests Strongly in Education, Doesn't Go All the Way with Minimum Wage and Developmental Disability Funding

The state legislature has passed a third consecutive on-time budget. It closes a \$1.3 billion budget deficit and includes a \$141.3 billion spending plan that increases aid for local schools and community colleges while also investing in infrastructure and affordable housing. The passage of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013-2014 Budget also includes tax relief for some working families and allocates federal funding to help pay for the clean-up following Superstorm Sandy. Overall, this budget addresses many of the priorities of the Assembly Majority by increasing funding for public education, healthcare and affordable housing.

Improvements to Education

The SFY 2013-2014 Budget allocates \$21.2 billion in aid for local school districts for the 2013-2014 school year. Formula Aid will be distributed in the amount of \$20.8 billion, a \$936 million increase from the 2012-2013 allocation. The budget agreement also includes \$25 million for the creation of additional half-day and full-day prekindergarten slots; \$20 million for Extended Learning Time; \$14.26 million for Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers; \$86.9 million in Aid to Public Libraries; and \$137.5 million in Aid to nonpublic schools.

The budget also improves higher education by raising the community college base aid to \$2,422 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, a \$150 increase per FTE. The plan also maintains \$3.1 million in child care services at state and community colleges for student parents, a 3% across the board increase for opportunity programs and a \$98.9 million appropriation to supportive services for economically and educationally disadvantaged residents for the 2013-2014 year.

Relief for Families

Included in the budget is more than \$21 million for safety net programs, \$10 million for services that support children and families and restores \$1.3 million for the Youth Development Program. The plan also restores more than \$21 million for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs and makes major restorations to Facilitated Enrollment (\$7.3 million); Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) (\$4.1 million); Nurse-Family Partnership (\$2 million); Non-Residential Domestic Violence (\$1.2 million); and Settlement Houses (\$1 million).

Falling Short on the Minimum Wage and Funding for Developmental Disabilities

The 2013-2014 Budget will raise the minimum wage incrementally to \$9.00 over the course of the next 2 years, but will not actually reach the \$9.00 mark till December 31, 2015. The minimum wage, unfortunately, will not be indexed to the cost of living.

While I am pleased that we were able to increase the minimum wage, I supported doing it all at once, not incrementally. Not having it indexed to inflation is another major disappointment.

In another disappointment, the budget agreement made significant cuts to funding for those with developmental disabilities, despite strong support for the funding from both the Assembly and Senate. These cuts will have a terrible, painful impact on many New Yorkers who are in desperate need of these important services.



Assemblyman Dinowitz joined Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. at his annual St. Patrick's Day celebration at the Rambling House in Woodlawn, where he honored Frank O'Hara, Vice President, Cactus Holdings; James McQuade, Owner, Schuyler Hill Funeral Parlor; and Noreen Lydon O'Donoghue, director of Director of Marketing and Public Relations, G.P.J. O'Donoghue Contracting Corp.



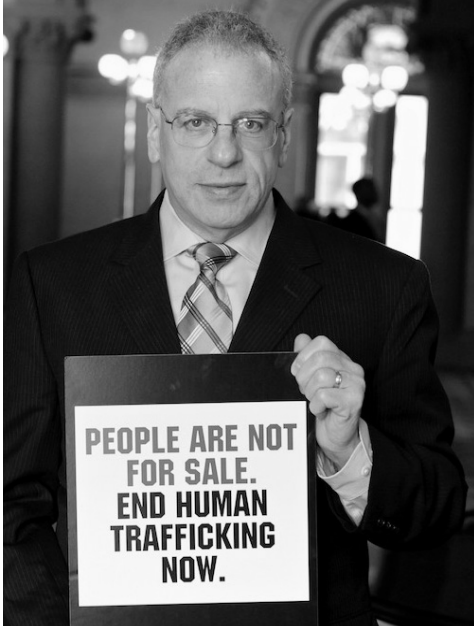
Riverdale Neighborhood House recently broke ground on its new Community and Teen Center which is being funded, in part, by a large capital grant secured by Assemblyman Dinowitz. Riverdale Neighborhood House President Josephine Perrella, Executive Director Dan Eudene and other board members, Assemblyman Dinowitz, Councilman Koppell, Senator Klein, Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene and a representative of Congressman Eliot Engel all joined together to celebrate the start of construction.

Fair Elections Act of 2013

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of the Fair Elections Act of 2013 which recently passed the Assembly. This legislation would establish a public financing system for statewide and legislative offices and create a Fair Elections Board which would be charged with enforcement over those candidates who opt into the system. It also requires expanded disclosure of independent expenditures and electioneering communications.

The reforms created in this system would allow candidates who meet the requirements and minimum threshold in fundraising to receive matching contributions of \$6 for every \$1 they

raise on contributions up to \$250. Candidates would be required to build a broad coalition of contributors by requiring a certain amount of small donors and residents from a candidate's district to be eligible for matching funds. This also ensures that large donors do not have disproportionate influence. Participating candidates can accept individual donations up to \$2,000, however only the first \$250 will be matched. Those candidates who choose not to participate in the system would be subject to the current campaign finance law; however they would be required to disclose bundlers of campaign contributions.



Assemblyman Dinowitz was the author of the landmark Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2007. He is pictured here in the State Capitol in support of passing even tougher anti-human trafficking legislation.



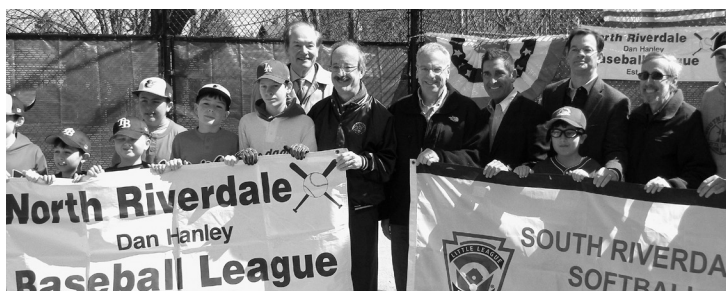
Assemblyman Dinowitz, Community Board 8 Chair Robert Fannuzzi and Community Board 8 Transportation Committee Chair Daniel Padernacht are shown in front of a new 20 mph speed limit sign that was just installed as part of the new Neighborhood Slow Zone in and around Independence Avenue in Central Riverdale. Assemblyman Dinowitz wrote the proposal and organized community support. The lower speed limit, along with 9 speed bumps, is expected to make the area safer for pedestrians and motorists alike.



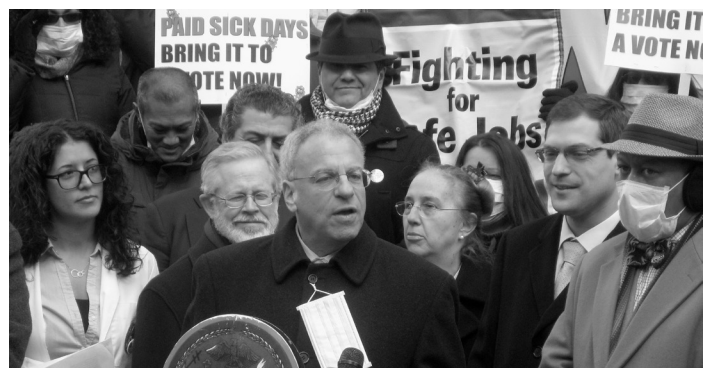
Assemblyman Dinowitz marched in the annual opening day parade of the Mosholu Montefiore little league. He is pictured here with some of the young superstars.

Free Notary Service

My office provides free notary service during regular office hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please bring two forms of identification, at least one with your photo and signature, if you would like your signature notarized.



Opening Day for Riverdale's little leagues was a double celebration because the annual parade was followed by the opening of the newly renovated Sid Augarten Field. Pictured with Assemblyman Dinowitz are Congressman Eliot Engel, State Senator Jeffrey Klein, City Councilman Oliver Koppell, Community Board 8 members Andrew Cohen and Bob Bender, Bronx Parks Commissioner Hector Aponte and coaches and players of the North Riverdale Baseball League and South Riverdale Softball.



Numerous elected officials and activists attended a rally on the steps of City Hall asking that the New York City Council take up the issue of paid sick leave. Assemblyman Dinowitz is a longtime advocate of this important legislation and strongly spoke out for it at this rally.