

## Assemblyman

# Jeffrey Dinowitz

### Reports to the People of the 81<sup>st</sup> Assembly District

**SUMMER 2014**

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

Dear Constituent:

When the legislative session ended in June, I was very proud of how much my colleagues and I were able to accomplish.

We increased state aid to New York City schools by more than \$435 million. We secured \$600 million over two years to create full-day universal pre-kindergarten programs. We passed the Smart School Initiative, a \$2 billion bond act to construct new pre-k classroom space and replace classroom trailers with permanent space. And that's just in the area of education.

The legislature significantly expanded eligibility for the SCRIE program for seniors. We provided tax breaks for homeowners, co-op and condo owners and renters. The Governor signed my legislation to increase access to the lifesaving drug naloxone, the heroin antidote.

Of course, I have been very busy in all of the neighborhoods in our district. Fighting an ill-advised supportive housing development on Broadway and an oversized medical building on Riverdale Avenue are just two examples of our elected officials and neighborhood leaders working together for the good of the community.

The residents of every area of our district, from Wakefield and Woodlawn to Norwood to Van Cortlandt Village, Kingsbridge Heights and Marble Hill to Kingsbridge and Riverdale all want the same things: good schools, safe streets and a high quality of life. Those are the things my staff and I fight for every day. If you have any issues or constituent problems, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz  
Member of Assembly



*Assemblyman Dinowitz has asked the New York State DOT to repair severely deteriorated retaining walls along Henry Hudson Parkway between West 231st and West 235th Streets. He is shown here holding part of the wall. Read more on Page 2!*

## Assemblyman Dinowitz Demands Better Bx7 and Bx10 Bus Service

I receive frequent complaints about long waits for crowded Bx7 and Bx10 buses that provide service to Kingsbridge, Norwood, Riverdale, and Van Cortlandt Village. Large crowds regularly form at the West 231st Street stop and others along the Bx7 and Bx10 bus lines during the morning and evening rush hours. Oftentimes, commuters are left waiting as multiple buses pass by that are too crowded to carry additional passengers, adding many minutes to their daily commutes.

The Bx7 and Bx10 buses are integral parts of this district's transportation infrastructure, but they are failing to provide adequate service to the community throughout the day. On August 7, I stood with other local elected officials at a press conference to advocate on behalf of the commuters who rely on these buses each and every day. I continue to urge the MTA to provide additional buses at more frequent intervals to the Bx7 and Bx10 bus lines to address this issue.



*Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and Councilmember Andrew Cohen joined former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at an event for the Bronx Children's Museum held at Lehman College.*

## Anti-Semitic Graffiti in Riverdale

This summer the Riverdale community witnessed a series of troubling incidents of anti-Semitism. Hate-filled graffiti, including swastikas and anti-Semitic messages, were found inscribed into McLaughlin Playground and Seton Park. While the graffiti was quickly removed by the police, it is deeply disturbing that the vandals used places of peace and safety as platforms for hate. Hateful messages such as these have no place in any community.

These incidents are currently under investigation by the NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force. It is my hope that those responsible for these hate crimes are found and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Together, we must continue to fight to keep our community respectful and welcoming to people of all ages, backgrounds, and faiths.



*Assemblyman Dinowitz stood with local rabbis including Rabbi Steven Exler, Rabbi Ari Hart, and Rabbi Barry Dov Katz, and Congressman Eliot Engel, local elected officials and residents to rally with hundreds of community residents at Seton Park in support of the State of Israel.*



*Assemblyman Dinowitz met with members of the New York Rangers including Derek Stepan, Asst. General Manager Jim Schoenfeld, Martin St. Louis, Dominic Moore, and General Manager Glen Sather, to congratulate them all on a great season and their Eastern Conference Championship.*

## Improvements Coming to Henry Hudson Parkway

Recently, I alerted the NYS Department of Transportation to a dangerous road condition on Henry Hudson Parkway between West 231st and West 235th Streets and asked that they make immediate repairs. The retaining walls that divide the service roads and the parkway leading up to the West 232nd Street overpass are badly deteriorated, with lengthy stretches of exposed, rusted rebar, large holes in the walls, and debris littering both the service road and the parkway. Stones can easily be picked off the retaining walls at several locations.

I was shocked at the poor condition of these retaining walls. This extreme deterioration may pose a serious risk to the thousands of commuters who drive along the Henry Hudson Parkway every day, as a loose stone or partially-obstructed lane could easily lead to a major accident. After I contacted the NYS DOT, the agency informed me that they plan to make repairs to the retaining walls in the near future.

## Settlement Reached for The Pinnacle Group Class Action Lawsuit

A settlement has been reached for a class action lawsuit against the Pinnacle Group Management Company, which owns and manages numerous rental properties in my district, for rent overcharge and harassment of over 31,000 tenants citywide. As part of the settlement, The Legal Aid Society and Legal Services NYC have formed The Pinnacle Settlement Legal Help Project, which helps tenants submit and prosecute damage claims against Pinnacle Group. **If you lived in a Pinnacle Group building between July 11, 2004 and April 27, 2010, you may be eligible for monetary damages.** If you believe that the Pinnacle Group has violated rules for rent increases, eviction proceedings, and apartment repairs, contact the Pinnacle Settlement Legal Help Project by phone: 888-736-8115 or visit their website at [www.rentlitigation.com](http://www.rentlitigation.com).

## Update on Montefiore Project

Last year Montefiore Medical Center proposed an eleven-story ambulatory care center facility on Riverdale Avenue and Oxford Avenue. Largely in reaction to the disproportionate size and capacity of the building that was proposed, hundreds of community residents attended a series of meetings to oppose this project. I have fought hard along with other elected officials to stop this project. My Senate colleague and I passed a law that stopped the original plan. While Montefiore is proposing a smaller facility, I will continue to work with colleagues and community residents to ensure that any development that takes place is carried out with extensive community input and support.



*Many community leaders attended the launch of the Marble Hill Community Garden. Assemblyman Dinowitz is pictured here with NYCHA President Shola Olatoye, Community Board 8 Chair Daniel Padernacht, Community Board members Georgia Santiago and Paul Ellis, organizer Jackie Fischer, and other community leaders and Marble Hill residents.*

## Expansion of Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program

The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program offers eligible seniors an exemption from future rent increases. If you qualify, your rent amount will be frozen and the City of New York will give your landlord a property tax credit equal to the amount of your future rent increase. **I am happy to report that the New York State Legislature has expanded the SCRIE income eligibility from \$29,000 to \$50,000.** If you would like more information or would like help with filing an initial SCRIE application, please feel free to call or stop by my office. To be eligible you must be at least 62 years of age, your income must not exceed \$50,000, and your annual rent must be greater than one third of your annual income.

# NEWS FROM ALBANY

Just two months ago, the New York State Legislature finished a very productive session. Below are a few of the bills that I sponsored.

## Medical Marijuana

I co-sponsored legislation allowing seriously ill patients to use medical marijuana to treat debilitating and life-threatening illnesses. The bill, which was signed into law on July 5, will allow licensed physicians to determine whether or not a patient suffering from a serious illness is likely to benefit from the use of medical marijuana. These patients would receive a special identification card, which they would be required to carry while in possession of the drug.

The NYS Department of Health will oversee the bill and will also impose a seven percent excise tax on medical marijuana sales to help fund our schools and other vital programs. Moreover, the bill imposes penalties on anyone attempting to defraud the program, and makes it a felony for a practitioner to prescribe marijuana when there is no medical need.

## Fracking Moratorium

The Assembly passed legislation that I co-sponsored that prohibits the use of hydraulic fracturing, also known as 'hydrofracking,' for natural gas and oil wells in New York State. For 36 months, the bill would suspend hydrofracking, to ensure there is adequate time to review its impact on public health and the environment. The hydrofracking process involves many toxic and hazardous air and water contaminants, including a number of known or suspected carcinogens. Studies in Colorado and Pennsylvania have raised many public health concerns for people living in communities near natural gas wells, including increased incidence of birth defects, cancer and endocrinological health disorders. I will not consider dropping my opposition to hydrofracking until I am convinced that there is absolutely no health risk that would result from it.

## Protecting Our Children's Credit

Previously, New York State law allowed a parent or guardian to freeze their child's credit only if a credit file already existed in the child's name. However, more often than not, a file existed only because the child had already fallen victim to identity theft. To address this issue, the legislature passed the bill I authored which created a mechanism whereby parents or guardians can freeze the credit record of a minor in order to prevent their child from becoming a victim of identity theft or fraud.

This measure has become increasingly necessary as a 2011 report by ID Analytics, an identity theft protection firm, noted that an estimated 140,000 minors are at risk of falling victim to identity theft each year. This legislation requires credit reporting agencies to place a credit record freeze on a child's account at the request of a parent or guardian.

## Opening Jerome Park Reservoir to the Public

The Jerome Park Reservoir is undoubtedly one of the Bronx's most precious resources, which is why I, along with my Senate colleague, introduced legislation that would make the perimeter of the reservoir available for public recreational use starting on January 1, 2019. Currently, the reservoir and the land surrounding the reservoir is under the jurisdiction of the NYC Department of Environmental Protection and use of the land by the public is strictly prohibited. This deprives the public of beautiful and spacious parkland. This bill would also establish a working group for Jerome Park consisting of community stakeholders, elected officials and leaders at nearby schools to help promote the recreational use of this newly open space.



*Assemblyman Dinowitz and Councilmember Andrew Cohen attended the Riverdale Temple Nursery School's Annual Truck Day. They are shown here with students in front of a fire truck.*



*Assemblyman Dinowitz partnered with the Bronx Council on the Arts to provide free concerts for community residents. Two of the concerts were held at the Amalgamated Train Park. Above, he is shown with Ginetta's Vendetta, which performed jazz and standards starring composer and trumpeter Ginetta M. Below, the Assemblyman is pictured second from the right with John Benitez and his Latin Jazz Band.*

## NYC Now Offering Universal Pre-K

Perhaps the most exciting news of the year is that newly elected New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, with the help of the State Legislature, kept his promise to bring full-day Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) to New York City! Every child deserves a first-class education and this year's state budget makes a significant investment in our children to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed. Early education has positive, long-lasting effects on our children, their academic achievement, and prospects for the future. Investing in UPK is a major accomplishment that will benefit our children and our city immensely for years to come.

More than 41,000 families have already applied for Pre-K, and while the deadline to apply online through the Department of Education has passed, I strongly encourage all families with young children to visit the Department of Education's website at [schools.nyc.gov/prek](http://schools.nyc.gov/prek) for more information about enrollment for future years.





*Assemblyman Dinowitz, Congressman Eliot Engel, and Councilmember Andrew Cohen joined hundreds of thousands of people for the annual Celebrate Israel Campaign. They are pictured above with students from SAR Academy, and below with students from Kinneret Day School. Among the performers on the countless floats were the cappella group Six13, of which Assemblyman Dinowitz's son, Eric, is a member.*



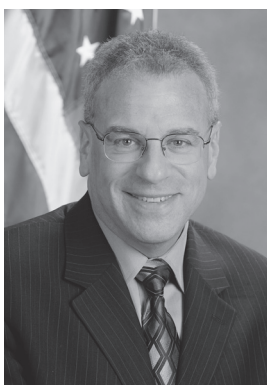
## Fighting To Keep Specialized High Schools Top Notch

On July 31st, the Riverdale Press published an Op-Ed I wrote about the admissions processes of Bronx Science and seven other specialized public high schools in New York City. I argued that these eight schools should continue to base their admissions decisions on a single, objective, criteria: scores on the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). These nationally-recognized educational institutions have admissions processes that are unaffected by political ties, athletic prowess, or family legacies, and they deserve to be cherished and protected. Over half of students at these schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch, many are immigrants or children of immigrants, and less than a quarter are white.

Instead of adding additional, more subjective criteria to the admissions process such as grades or attendance, I recommended that the city automatically register all students for the SHSAT and ensure that every student has access to free test preparatory classes. Of course, these recommendations are only part of the solution. Together, we must continue to work on fixing our educational system so that every child from day one has an equal opportunity for a top-notch education.

## Hundreds Attend Assemblyman Dinowitz's Summer Concerts

I was pleased to present a series of six free summer concerts throughout the district in partnership with the Bronx Council on the Arts. Hundreds of members of the community came out to the concerts, and were able to relax and enjoy the wonderful tunes. Performers included John Benitez and his Latin Jazz Band, Ginetta's Vendetta, Gene DiNapoli and his "Bronx Bombers Show," Orchestra SCC, and the Just Nuts Party Dance Band. Two of the concerts were held at the Amalgamated Train Park and another two were held at Williamsbridge Oval. Concerts also took place at The Riverdale YM-YWHA and Henry Hudson Park.



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## Free Notary Service

My office provides free notary service during regular office hours between 10 a.m. and 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.



*I stood with the Bronx Borough President and members of the New York City Council supporting legislation to establish a public registry of people who have been convicted of gun-related criminal offenses. I am also co-sponsoring legislation in the Assembly, introduced by Assemblyman Carl Heastie, to establish a similar gun offender registry statewide. A registry would provide our communities with information on potentially dangerous people in their neighborhood, and help discourage repeat gun-related offenses.*