



# Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

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

DECEMBER 2017

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

Dear Neighbor:

As we approach the New Year the state is facing a large budget deficit that could seriously impact the funding for health care, education, and other important areas. In addition, the tax “reform” proposals of the President and Congressional leaders would cut the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20% (approximately 42% less than they were paying), eliminate the estate tax (which was only paid by the super-rich), increase taxes on the middle class, raise taxes on states like New York and California and otherwise be the biggest transfer of wealth to corporations and the rich in U.S. history.

In the state we all have a busy agenda once the next legislative season gets underway in January. The MTA crisis must be resolved. We need to address health care coverage, including discussing single payer, especially in light of the President’s efforts to deprive millions of people of health care coverage, and of course we always need to deal with school funding issues.

Thankfully, the referendum on whether or not to have a state constitutional convention was overwhelmingly defeated, but that doesn’t take us off the hook from addressing some of the issues that were raised, such as ethics reform and campaign reform.

As always my district office staff is ready to help with any constituent complaints, cutting through government red tape. Plus we provide free notary service. A wonderful holiday season to all and a healthy and happy new year!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz  
Assemblyman



Assemblyman Dinowitz attended the annual Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortlandt Development dinner. Pictured from left to right Eric Dinowitz, Deputy Inspector Terrence O’Toole, Congressman Elliot Engel, KRVC honoree Detective Mindy Ramos and Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz.

### Assemblyman Dinowitz and Congressman Engel Organize Successful Puerto Rico Donation Drive

As the dire situation in Puerto Rico continues, New York has stepped up in the absence of effective measures from the Federal government. For example, Congressman Engel and I used our offices as collection centers for supplies to be donated to Puerto Rico.

Donations poured in from across the West Bronx, ranging from generators, to diapers and feminine hygiene products as well as canned food products. Our offices were packed to the absolute brim. We delivered two truckloads of supplies to the state collection site at Roberto Clemente State Park. They were then delivered to Camp Smith for transportation to Puerto Rico.

I am thrilled with the response we got from our constituents. We were flooded with donations every day, and had such a huge response that we had to open the office over the weekend to take in all of the donations. I am so thankful and proud of the generosity demonstrated not just by my own constituents but by all of New York.



Assemblyman Dinowitz shown loading a U-Haul with food, water, hygiene and first aid supplies collected at his office and ready to be donated to Puerto Rico after the disastrous Hurricane Maria left millions of Americans without power, access to clean water or adequate food.

## Assemblyman Dinowitz Battles Post Office's Mailbox Removals

I was able to prevent the removal of over 20 mailboxes in my Assembly District. In September I learned that a number of mailboxes were to be removed starting on October 8th. My office had received no word that this was planned. The Post Office (USPS) refused to provide a complete list of the mailboxes to be removed; however I was able to acquire a list for the Bronx and Manhattan from an alternate source which listed over 200 mailboxes set to be removed across the Bronx, most of which actually had notices on them that they were to be removed.

Many of the targeted mailboxes are in areas that heavily serve senior citizens who rely on postal service to carry out basic needs such as paying rent or utility bills. After I publicly exposed this plan I was informed that there had been a "mistake" and the removal notices on the mailboxes were placed there erroneously. It is clear to me that, in fact, the USPS did intend to remove large numbers of mailboxes but backed down when I exposed their plan. The post office must not be allowed to engage in this major downsizing of service in the Bronx.



Assemblyman Dinowitz spoke at a TransitCenter Rally demanding improved subway accessibility and full ADA compliance for all of the city's subway platforms during TransitCenter's AccessDenied Campaign.



Assemblyman Dinowitz was honored and awarded the Rider's Alliance Transit Champion award for fighting for better subway and buses and working with them to improve New York City's transit system.

## Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz Honored as "Transit Champion" by Riders Alliance

I was honored at the 2017 Riders Alliance Gala as their "Transit Champion" for public service on behalf of New York City transit riders. In my short tenure as Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions, I quickly became a loud and vocal leader in the fight for better mass transit in our city and state.

Earlier this spring, when Executive Budget proposed a reduction of \$65 million in the MTA's operating budget I led the fight in the Assembly against the proposed budget cuts, and was ultimately successful in getting \$65 million added to the MTA capital budget.

I also led the fight for improved bus service, including several simple changes that would reduce bus travel times by 25%. In August, I recruited 45 of my colleagues to demand that the MTA and New York City Transit implement all-door boarding and transit signal priority in addition to coordinating with the Department of Transportation to reexamine existing bus routes and street architecture to make bus service more efficient.

I am honored to be given this award from Riders Alliance. As someone who didn't start driving until I was almost 30 years old, I know firsthand how essential a functional mass transit system is to New York City. Our fight is far from over, and I will continue to be a loud and vocal advocate for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century transit system that New York can be proud of.



## Assemblyman Dinowitz Demands ADA Compliant Subways

I recently stood outside the West 231<sup>st</sup> downtown 1 Train Elevator with City Comptroller Scott Stringer, Council Member Andrew Cohen, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, other elected officials and transit advocates to demand a concrete plan from the MTA to achieve 100% ADA compliance within a reasonable time period plus major improvements to the MTA's current elevator maintenance procedures. An audit from Comptroller Stringer found that nearly 80 percent of machines sampled did not receive all of their scheduled preventative maintenance and that nearly a quarter of sampled maintenance checklists were not completed.

Despite the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, New York City has lagged behind other cities in meeting ADA compliance. According to TransitCenter, only 23% of Subway stations are accessible to those who cannot use stairs to reach the train platforms. This is not only an issue for people with disabilities, but also for parents with strollers, seniors who have difficulty with stairs, and people traveling with large bags.

Even when stations do have elevators, chronic breakdowns and a lack of real-time elevator availability information leave many transit users stranded without any opportunity to plan ahead. The West 231<sup>st</sup> Street downtown elevator (the only ADA accessible station on the 1 line in my Assembly district) was out of service nearly every other day during the month of August.

We need to both add new elevators at all subway stations and make sure our existing elevators are properly maintained.

Assemblyman Dinowitz held a Press Conference at the West 231<sup>st</sup> Street and Broadway elevator to call for improved subway elevator maintenance and greater accessibility after frequent elevator breakdowns at this location and across the city. Pictured are City Comptroller Scott Stringer and Assemblyman Dinowitz

## Good Job: DOT Installs Traffic Light at Fort Independence and Heath Avenue and Left Turn Signal at West 230<sup>th</sup> Street and Tibbett Avenue

I have worked for quite a while to improve the dangerous conditions at Heath Avenue and Fort Independence Street. Early this year our local elected officials, Deputy Inspector O'Toole and Det. Mindy Ramos of the 50<sup>th</sup> precinct and community residents, including Jordan Moss, joined me at this intersection to demand installation of a traffic light and other safety measures at this intersection.

Previously, a stop sign and yield sign were located at this odd-shaped and dangerous intersection. Parents and students walking across the intersection to P.S. 360 were forced to put up with unsafe traffic conditions and drivers must take precautions to be wary of pedestrians that were previously forced to run and weave between cars without a traffic light and without crosswalks.

This traffic light in Kingsbridge Heights is up and running! I am very pleased that the DOT heeded the calls from the community and from elected officials to do something to make this community safer.

Meanwhile, DOT installed a left turn signal that I requested at Tibbett Avenue and westbound West 230<sup>th</sup> Street. There is heavy traffic there, especially when thousands of students and school personnel enter or leave the education complex at this Kingsbridge/Marble Hill location. The left turn signal allows cars to enter more safely, decreasing traffic backups at this location. Thank you DOT.

*Assemblyman Dinowitz attended the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park. Included in this picture are Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. Congressman Elliot Engel, Assemblyman Dinowitz and Council Member Andrew Cohen. Also shown here are the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park honorees Elizabeth Scheuer, Jane Sokolow, Felicity Nitz, Frances Beinecke, Sybil Willand, Susan Morgenthau, as well as Nathalia Fernandez representing the Governor and Christina Taylor, Executive Director of the FVCP.*



## Assemblyman Dinowitz Denounces Abysmal Conditions During Building Renovation

Some Sedgwick Avenue families have been unable have a home-cooked meal in their own apartments because of highly intrusive and possibly unnecessary renovations on many of the 57 units in their Kingsbridge Heights building. Tenants have reported that at least six units are forced to share one communal bathroom while renovation work is performed in their apartments. Some tenants reported that their kitchens were covered in plastic sheeting and were unusable for weeks or months at a time.

The Department of Health discovered four different measurements for lead that exceeded acceptable EPA standards and the Department of Buildings issued multiple stop work orders as a result of fire safety concerns. A second building owned by the same owner, The Morgan

Group, on East 196<sup>th</sup> Street has had the same problems. The Morgan Group has indicated that they intend to apply for a Major Capital Improvement (MCI) increase which, if granted, would permanently raise the rents of rent regulated tenants by hundreds of dollars per year.

Tenant advocates have long identified 'harassment by construction' as a tactic used by some landlords to coerce longtime tenants out of their apartments in order to raise rent by the larger vacancy increase amount (currently at 20%, compared to 1.25% or 2% for a rent stabilized renewal lease). In my opinion and based on what I have heard and seen, there are very serious violations here. If it's determined that illegal harassment has occurred then I strongly urge the Attorney General to take appropriate action.



*Assemblyman Dinowitz and Deann Forman, CEO of the Riverdale YM-YWHA celebrate the Y's new playground that the Assemblyman secured funding for.*



*Assemblyman Dinowitz and Council Member Andrew Cohen are pictured here with the fearsome Shreddersaurus during the Assemblyman's Shred Day event where hundreds of people came from across the district to shred their personal documents for free.*

## Assemblyman Dinowitz Enacts New Pro-Tenant Law to Combat Illegal Non-Rental Fees

Governor Cuomo signed my legislation, sponsored by Marisol Alcantara in the Senate, to protect tenants by requiring a notice prepared by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) about authorized non-rental fees that can be imposed by landlords. This legislation was one of a very few pieces of pro-tenant legislation to make it to the governor's desk this year.

Currently, landlords attempt to illegally raise the rent of protected tenants by imposing unidentified fees as a way to increase their rent revenues beyond the permissible amount set annually by the Rent Guidelines Board. These fees can include legal and late charges, background checks

and employment verification, and others. Many low-income tenants are unaware which fees are legally allowed and which are not and often simply pay the fees to avoid threats of eviction or further legal action. The DHCR currently publishes a fact sheet (#44) regarding fees for rent-regulated tenants, and this legislation would simply require that this fact sheet be included in the rent stabilization lease rider currently provided. While this is not a cure-all for bad landlords, making sure that tenants know their rights is a positive step towards protecting New York's stock of affordable housing.

## Assemblyman Dinowitz Introduces Bill to Protect Consumers in Wake of Equifax Data Breach

I have taken a strong stand for consumers who have been impacted by the unprecedented Equifax data breach by introducing new legislation that will establish requirements for credit reporting agencies (CRAs) to protect consumers in the instance of a data breach. My bill, A05242, would require that a CRA provide free lifetime identity theft protection monitoring and mitigation services for the lifetime of their consumer credit report after any data breach that involves Social Security numbers. Furthermore, the bill would also prohibit fees to freeze and unfreeze a consumer credit report that has been impacted by the breach for the lifetime of that report.

CRAs hold significant influence over the financial abilities of Americans to borrow money. While Equifax has agreed to waive fees for security freezes for a short time period and offered 12 months of identity theft protection services at no charge, this is

insufficient and does not fully rectify the damage that has been done in this data breach. There has been no indication that Experian or TransUnion (the other two main CRAs) are planning to waive their fees for a credit freeze despite the fact that money lenders rely on a combination of all three CRAs to assess the viability of a consumer's credit reliability.

People's credit rating is no trivial matter. For Equifax to say they will protect affected consumers for only 12 months is ridiculous. What is stopping the crooks who stole this information from just waiting 366 days instead of 365 before using it? Furthermore, in what world does it make sense to reward Equifax for their negligence by allowing them to collect fees from innocent consumers whose personal information was stolen? This bill needs to be passed.

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Our 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.



Assemblyman Dinowitz attended Senator Jeff Klein's Concert in the Park at Seton Park featuring Herman's Hermits. Pictured from left to right are Deputy Inspector Terrence O'Toole, Randi Martos, Assemblyman Dinowitz, Peter Noone, Senator Jeff Klein, and Eric Dinowitz.