

# COMMUNITY UPDATE

MAY 2019



Fellow Queens Residents,

In the past few weeks, my colleagues and I have been hard at work advocating for and passing legislation designed to improve the lives of New York residents. We are working to ensure that you have access to quality healthcare, affordable housing and fair elections. As we approach the end-of-session rush, I will send updates on the exciting reforms that we shepherd through the New York State Assembly.

As always, my office can be a resource for you. If you are having trouble obtaining benefits that you are entitled to, need information about state or city programs, have a concern about our neighborhood, or want to share an idea for new legislation, please contact me at 718-545-3889 or [simotasa@nyassembly.gov](mailto:simotasa@nyassembly.gov).

Warm regards,  
Assemblymember Aravella Simotas

## RECENTLY PASSED IN THE NYS ASSEMBLY

- My **Rape is Rape** bill passed in the Assembly in April. The bill amends the definition of rape in the New York to include what is traditionally defined as rape **and** forced anal and oral contact with the genitals. The bill also changes the penetration element currently needed to prove rape in New York to a contact standard. It has been seven years since I first introduced this legislation, and the measure has passed the Assembly every year since 2013, only to die in the Senate. Now, under new leadership, my **Rape is Rape bill** is scheduled to finally be voted on in the Senate later in the month.
- Another bill passed in the Assembly would allow courts to **designate revenue collected for violations of New York State's antitrust laws** to the Office of Victim Services. The measure creates another revenue stream for this agency, which serves the interests of crime victims and their families.
- Legislation passed that would make victims of unlawful surveillance and **children who witness certain crimes eligible to receive monetary awards** from the Office of Victim's Services. The awards would provide necessary support for mental health counseling, transportation to court dates and damaged property.
- In yet another victory for crime victims, the Assembly passed a bill adding **domestic partners to the list of people eligible to receive state compensation** if their loved one is murdered.





## LAWS THAT WENT INTO EFFECT IN APRIL 2019



- Prohibits employers from discriminating against employees or applicants based on their religious attire, including any clothing articles or facial hair that a person may wear in observance of their religious tradition.
- Requires the **Secretary of State to create an index of female policy makers** and make that information available online to highlight where more women should be promoted to leadership positions.
- Mandates that **all state buildings have areas dedicated to breastfeeding** that are open to the public.

- Allows **registered nurses to provide essential care to newborn infants without waiting for direct orders from a doctor.**
- Requires the state to license all real estate appraisal management companies.
- Creates a program called **"The People's History Project"** dedicated to the telling of overlooked stories in American history.

---

## BEST OF THE MONTH

### Greek Independence Day Parade



I celebrated Greek Independence Day with New York's vibrant Greek community. I was delighted to spend some time with my colleagues of Greek descent.

### Talking 2020 Census



I recently visited my alma mater, W.C. Bryant High School, to speak with students about the issues facing our district ahead of the 2020 census. Queens experienced a severe undercount in the 2010 census, resulting in the loss of critical financial resources and political representation. I discussed what is at stake for our community if we suffer another undercount. I was encouraged that many students and educators expressed interest in this very important issue.



## LadiesFirst Talks

I attended a roundtable discussion with LadiesFirstAstoria, an organization dedicated to supporting a real world social network of women supporting women in their community.

We discussed infertility and pregnancy loss, and the many taboos associated with this common medical condition that affects countless women.



## #SexualHarassmentFreeNYC

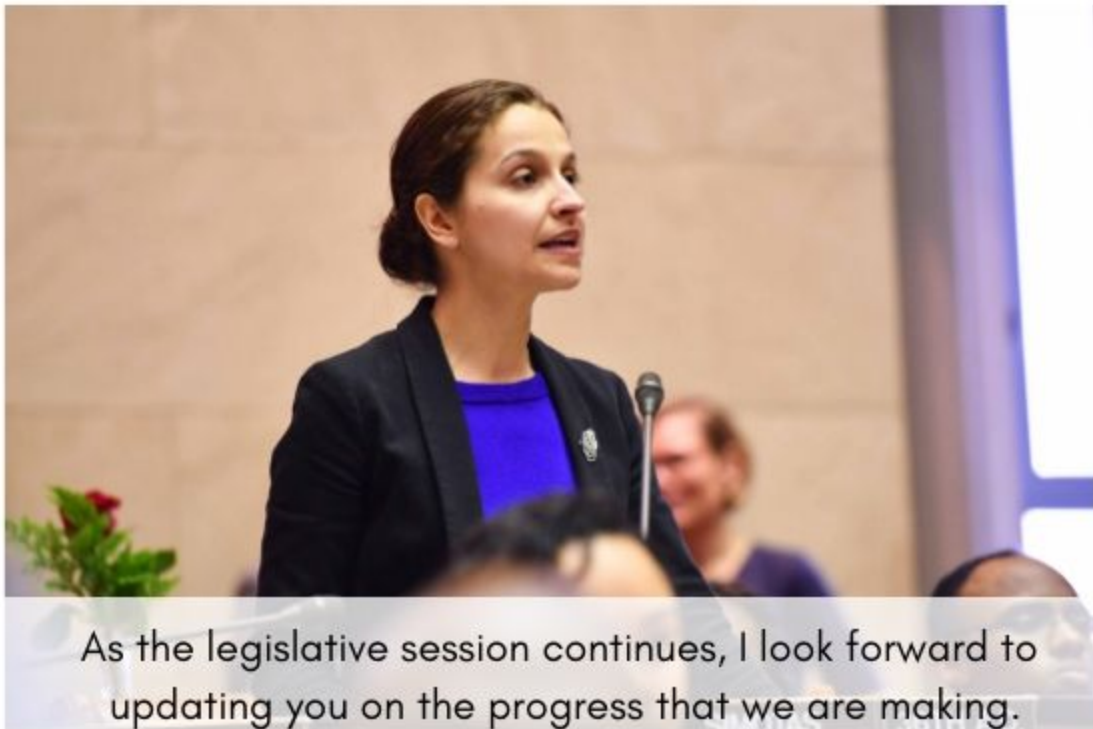


At a rally, held by the Sexual Harassment Working Group, I and a number of former legislative staffers and assault survivors called on the legislature to have more hearings on sexual harassment in the workplace. In February, we held an 11-hour hearing and learned we need more comprehensive, trauma-informed policies in New York State to combat the scourge of sexual harassment. The next hearing is May 24th in New York City.

## HAPPENING IN QUEENS



This Memorial Day from 1-4 pm, Socrates Sculpture Park in partnership with the Long Island City Community Boathouse will be offering **free kayaking and canoeing** from Socrates' Beach at Halletts Cove. No prior experience is necessary and all equipment will be provided.



As the legislative session continues, I look forward to updating you on the progress that we are making.