



Assemblymember  
**Jo Anne Simon**

52nd District



**Announcements & Upcoming Events**

**June 2019**

**A Message from Jo Anne...**

As we gear up for the final month of this legislative session, there are still many key items on the table that we must address. We have yet to pass a critical environmental bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (the Climate and Community Protection Act), a bill to end the inhumane practice of solitary confinement, and remaining voter reform bills (more on this on p. 4). Fortunately, we are making progress on a package of bills designed to strengthen our rent laws and to prevent the hemorrhage of our dwindling stock of affordable, rent-regulated units. I am grateful to the Legal Aid Society, Metropolitan Council on Housing and the Carroll Gardens Association/Southwest Brooklyn Tenants Union for presenting at my workshop earlier this month on housing issues and the proposed legislation.

I am also still pushing for a variety of other measures, including residential parking permits, a bill to increase community input and Department of Health oversight in hospital closures, gun violence prevention measures, a bill to study “crisis pregnancy centers” (a.k.a. fake health clinics that give women misinformation about reproductive health) and bills to expand access to lifesaving treatment for people struggling with opioid misuse. The legislature also held our second hearing of this session on sexual harassment (it had been over 27 years since the previous hearings!) and I’m hopeful that we will pass a host of bills that will combat this issue.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne Simon

**Senior Resource Fair 6/28/2019.** Please join me for my Annual Senior Resource Fair on June 28<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 2pm at St. Francis College, 180 Remsen Street (between Court St and Clinton St). A variety of groups will be available to provide you with information on legal services, health care, government services, community resources, and more! There will also be a town hall on housing.

**Bill to Eliminate the “Pink Tax” on Gendered Goods is Passed.** I am pleased to announce that the Assembly has passed a bill that I cosponsor to end discriminatory pricing for gendered goods, (A.629). The bill would prohibit businesses from charging consumers different prices for similar goods based on gender; that is, products that are targeted to women, but perform the same function as men’s products, such as razors and shaving cream. The bill would not prohibit retail establishments from passing on the price set by a manufacturer, distributor or other entity out of the retailer’s control. Currently, women’s products cost an average of 7% more than men’s products. This legislation would expand the City’s existing gender pricing law to address institutionalized price discrimination for consumer goods and promote fairness in the marketplace.

**Celebrating Pride & Fighting Bigotry.** I was pleased to march in the Brooklyn Pride parade this month and celebrate with my LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters. It was also great to see the variety of vendors serving the LGBTQ+ community, from businesses to the NYC Department of Health, to Planned Parenthood to SAGE (advocating for LGBTQ+ older people), GRIOT Circle (serving LGBTQ+ people of color as they age), Human

Rights Campaign, Brooklyn Community Pride Center, and more. This year is particularly significant as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Stonewall uprising which propelled the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement (and we also welcome visitors from across the globe as New York City hosts World Pride). With hate crimes in our city on the rise this year, it's important to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community, celebrate visibility and fight bigotry as we continue to strive toward full equality. Please reach out to me should you need assistance accessing any services.

**Wage Equity for Car Wash Workers.** I am proud to announce that the Assembly has passed a bill to ensure that car wash workers are paid minimum wage (A.6346C). Under current law, car wash workers are paid a tip credit wage based on the region where they are employed. Calculating the tipped wage can be confusing and difficult, resulting in workers being underpaid, and enabling unscrupulous employers to commit wage theft. As a cosponsor of this bill, I am committed to protecting the rights of this vulnerable work force and ensuring that every hard-working New Yorker is paid a fair wage.

**Brianna's Law to Make Boating Safer is Passed.** I am pleased to announce that the Assembly has also passed Brianna's Law, which I cosponsor, expanding requirements for boating safety classes and making New York's waterways safer (A.4853-A). Under current law, new boat owners are exempt from the requirement to complete a safety course for up to 120 days after the purchase of a vessel, and the requirement applies only to operators born after May 1, 1996. Because the majority of boat owners in the state are much older, this has created a gap in the number of boaters who receive these important safety courses. Brianna's law would close that gap. Named for Brianna Lieneck, an 11-year-old girl who was fatally injured in a boating collision off the coast of Long Island, the bill would require any individual who operates a mechanically propelled vessel in New York State navigable waters to complete a boating safety course.

**Assembly Passes Legislative Package to Support New Yorkers with Disabilities.** In recognition of Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day on May 29, I helped pass an Assembly legislative package aimed at improving the lives of people with disabilities. The package included bills to protect disability rights, ensure access to higher education, facilitate civic engagement and voting, improve emergency preparedness, protect health care rights, and establish tax credits to incentivize the employment of people with disabilities and to promote accessible housing.

**Summer Reading Challenge for Schools & Students!** Avoid the Summer Brain Drain: elementary and middle school students are invited to participate in my summer reading challenge. Please let me know of a school that would like to participate, or if you would like a form for a student to participate. It's fun and students will return to school in September with those "learning muscles" well-toned. There is also a certificate ceremony. Email [simonj@nyassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@nyassembly.gov) for details. Download posters and brochures in English, Spanish, Chinese, French, French-Creole, Arabic, & Bengali: <https://nyassembly.gov/mem/Jo-Anne-Simon/postings>

**My Free Rain Barrel Giveaway: 7/14/19.** Join me for a rain barrel giveaway, co-sponsored with the Friends of Carroll Park, on Sun., July 14<sup>th</sup> in Carroll Park (Smith St. between Carroll St. & President St.), from 10am - 2pm. Water collected can be used to water gardens and for other outdoor chores. These 60-gallon barrels capture storm water before it enters the sewer system to help prevent sewage overflows from entering into our local waterways. Barrels can connect directly to your downspout to capture and store rain water. Rain barrels are provided by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, through the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan. You must RSVP to receive a barrel by emailing [simonj@nyassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@nyassembly.gov) or calling 718-246-4889.

**NYSDEC Hosts a Discussion on Remediation of MGP Sites on the Gowanus Canal: 6/13/2019.** The New York State Department of Environmental Conservancy (NYSDEC) invites you to a discussion about National Grid's cleanup of the Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP) sites on the Gowanus Canal. The meeting will take place on Thurs., June 13<sup>th</sup> at PS 372, 7-9pm, The Children's School, gym entrance, at 291 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Brooklyn. The goal of the cleanup is to protect public health and the environment, which includes cleaning the soil, demolition of building foundations and former MGP Structures, construction of a steel bulkhead barrier wall along the canal and of a cover system, development of a Site Management Plan for the long-term maintenance of the remedy, and more. Action is to start in June 2019 and is expected to take 20 months to complete. Contact DEC at 518-402-9589 or [john.miller@dec.ny.gov](mailto:john.miller@dec.ny.gov). For information about the history and impacts of the site, go to <http://www.citizensmgpsite.com/html/abcitizens.html>.

**Antigone in Ferguson: 5/8/19 - 7/13/19.** Brooklyn Public Library and Theater of War Productions are presenting Sophocles' Antigone, a new version by Bryan Doerries. Performances feature a rotating cast of actors and choirs. Shows are Wednesday-Saturday, 7-9:30pm and Saturday matinee, 2-5:30pm at St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn, 11201. More info: [AlFinfo@theaterofwar.com](mailto:AlFinfo@theaterofwar.com), 917-426-3233, or <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/antigone-in-ferguson-tickets-58545599464>.

**Shakespeare in Carroll Park: starting 6/14/19.** Smith Street Stage is back! This year, they're performing Romeo & Juliet. June 14<sup>th</sup> is opening night, with a reception in the park following the performance. Other performances are June 15-16, 20-23, and 27-30. All shows begin at 7:30pm. No tickets required, and seating is first-come, first-served. More info: <http://www.smithstreetstage.org/>.

**Gowanus Visions Art Festival: 6/15/19.** Gowanus Visions: A Festival of Art and Action will feature performances, environmental education and volunteering, participatory art builds and storytelling, visual art exhibit, a DJ dance party, and more at various locations in Gowanus. The festival is Sat., June 15<sup>th</sup>, from 1-6:30pm along the Gowanus Canal. For details, a schedule of events, and to sign up: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gowanus-visions-a-festival-of-art-and-action-tickets-60972756155>.

**Brooklyn Gender Equity Summit: 6/17/19.** NYC Commission on Gender Equity is hosting a summit to address how to ensure greater gender diversity at all levels of public service, involve men and youth, and eliminate gender-based violence in all communities. The event will include facilitated small group discussions. The summit is on Mon., 6/17, from 6-9pm, at BRIC, 647 Fulton St., Brooklyn. For details and to RSVP: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/genderequity/gender-equity-summits.page>.

**Free Tax Lien Clinic: 6/24/19.** Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project and Bridge Street Development Corp will be assisting Brooklyn homeowners understand their options to avoid the City's upcoming tax lien sale and complete any necessary paperwork to apply for an exemption or payment agreement. The clinic is on Mon., June 24<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm, at the Bridge Street office, 260 Nostrand Ave., Brooklyn. Bring a photo ID and a copy of your deed. For details, contact Sarah Filcher: 718-473-9208.

**Free Events at Brooklyn Bridge Park.** New York Classical Theatre is performing The Importance of Being Earnest in the park from 6/18/19 through 6/23/19 at Pier 1. All performances are 7-9 pm. Throughout the summer, there are free basketball clinics, fitness classes, outdoor movies, kayaking, and more! To learn about free summer events, go to: <https://www.brooklynbridgepark.org/events>.

**Next Steps to Fix New York's Archaic Election Laws:** New York State has the dubious honor of having one of the worst voting rates in the country. During the 2016 presidential primary, a measly 22% of eligible voters cast their ballot. New York ranked 44<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states for turnout in the November 2018 election (FairVote).

Fortunately, we are finally making progress and we are making it quickly. With Democrats gaining control of the State Senate, the legislature has passed several historic election reform bills this session that have languished in the Senate for years. This includes bills to allow for early voting, online voter registration, and the consolidation of federal and state primaries. The legislature also passed constitutional amendments to enact same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting, which will need to be passed again in the next legislative session and then approved by a statewide public referendum.

However, there is more work to do to fix our election laws and make it easier to vote. **We must move the deadline for registered voters to enroll in or change their party affiliation. New York State's deadline to change party enrollment is the most restrictive deadline in the entire country.** Under current law, registered voters seeking to change their party enrollment need to do so up to 8 months before the primary election. This is long before many people have even started thinking about voting and is often long before we know who is running for office. Nearly 3 million New Yorkers are not enrolled in a major party. Those voters are, in many parts of the state including New York City, effectively disenfranchised by the current deadline. For example, if an unaffiliated voter wanted to vote in a June primary, they would have had to enroll in a party in October of the preceding year in order to vote! That just doesn't make sense.

We ought to ensure that voters can more easily participate in all steps of the electoral process, including the candidate selection process. Senator Brian Kavanagh and I sponsor a bill ([A.1423/S2338](#)), which would allow currently registered voters to change their party affiliation or to enroll in a party up to 25 days before a primary election, the same deadline as new voter registration. This is a fair and feasible path forward since the Board of Elections already must process new registrations at that time. It would also put New York on par with the average deadline for party enrollment across the country.

However, none of these reforms will do much for New York's pitiful voter turnout rates if eligible voters aren't registered. That is why New York must also enact an automatic voter registration program so that individuals are automatically registered to vote any time they have contact with certain state agencies, unless they choose to opt-out. We should also codify the Governor's executive order into law and pass a bill to add thousands of new voters to the rolls simply by allowing people on parole - who have already paid their debt to society - to register to vote. And we must bring Instant-Runoff Voting (IRV) (also called ranked choice voting) to city-wide elections in New York City. IRV would allow voters to rank their candidates by preference order, as opposed to only voting for one candidate, thus avoiding costly run-offs and ensuring that the winner is getting a majority of votes. I hold a state bill ([A.1420](#)) to implement IRV and recently joined a coalition to call on the NYC Charter Commission to place IRV as a proposal on November's ballot.

Our democracy is at its best when every eligible person can exercise their fundamental right to vote, so I'm pushing hard for these changes this session.

***For community and policy updates, sign up for my email alerts by emailing [simonj@nysassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@nysassembly.gov)***

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