



Dear Neighbor,

As the year comes to an end and we think about new beginnings, there are some changes that will make a significant difference in our lives and political landscape. To begin with, I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to continue to serve the people of the 66th Assembly District. As I look forward to a new legislative session, we will have a different majority in the State Senate. Many of the bills I, and others, have sponsored and which have repeatedly passed the Assembly are now likely to pass in the Senate and become law, assuming the Governor signs them.

We will also see a change in Washington, DC, where there will be a shift in the majority in the House of Representatives and with that a restoration of some checks and balances. None of these changes will result in instant remedies to the greatest problems facing us, from climate change to income inequality and healthcare costs, but they will signal an opportunity to redirect the public and political discourse and to advance new approaches that have been stalled for too long.

A new year will also offer us the chance to reflect, as a society, on the varied impacts our pressured lives have on our health. In recent years, many people have indicated a higher level of stress, some of it owing to the political uncertainties experienced daily. Additionally, the increasing cost of healthcare has forced many people to gamble on their own health in order to cover other critical costs from housing and food and education. However, there are other aspects of our health both individually and as communities which need to be examined.

We know stress can have a dramatic impact on our lives and yet we are working harder and longer without significant increases in income. By spending more time working, there is less time to engage in more healthful pursuits from exercising, visiting with friends, or even cooking dinner at home. The issue of work/life balance is better addressed in many other developed countries, yet we seem tied to our puritan beginnings where "idle hands do the devil's work," leaving many New Yorkers running ever faster but not necessarily happier.

Technology has made some activities easier and more available, but the growing digital addiction leaves too many of us sitting around staring at our screens. Too many companies believe all employees can be working at all hours, and too many children think the action they experience on the screen is a substitute for riding a bike, playing ball or going for a walk in a park. So whether it is ensuring children are getting more time for active play or finding fulfilling and affirming activities for ourselves, from volunteering to renewing interest in your favorite hobby, putting a focus on wellness can help us all as we face a New Year with many exciting challenges.

Sincerely,

Deborah

Legislative Priorities in the Upcoming Session

With the commencement of the 2019 Legislative Session only a few short weeks away, I wanted to share with you my expectations for the coming year, and a few of my personal priorities. This year, my Assembly colleagues and I have the privilege of working with a newly elected majority in the State Senate. With this change in leadership, we can expect to see our state government take meaningful action on the policies that are important to our communities and state. Although this coming year holds historic changes for the state's business in Albany, I will remain a fierce advocate on behalf of our district.

State Budget

Every year, the first few months of the legislative session is dominated by the crafting of the State Budget. As your voice in Albany, I will ensure that the interests of our community are properly addressed. We are all fortunate to live in a vibrant, diverse, and welcoming part of the state, and this cannot be taken for granted. Additionally, as the Assembly Chair of the Higher Education Committee, I will vigorously advocate for the needs of New York's two premier public higher education institutions, the City University of New York (CUNY) and the State University of New York (SUNY), as well as a dynamic non-profit private sector. Access to quality public education is a foundational component of economic mobility, so I will continue to lend my voice to increased funding for the many successful Opportunity Programs that bring the promise of higher education within reach to many students. I will include a more in-depth update of budget talks in a later newsletter.

Reproductive Choice

In 1970, New York became a national leader on reproductive choice by legalizing abortion in certain circumstances. Since then, a na-



After 12 years of hard work and considerable collaboration with many of our community stakeholders, we celebrated the opening of the 75 Morton Street School. The school is now open and serving over 600 students in our community.

tionwide right to access abortion was created in the Supreme Court decisions Roe v Wade and Planned Parenthood v Casey. Unfortunately, New York's groundbreaking law has not been updated in 48 years. This has led to extremely problematic inconsistencies

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It was my pleasure to support newly unionized New School academic student workers as they advocated for improvements in their compensation, benefits and working conditions.

between State and Federal law, which has had a chilling effect on the delivery of reproductive services in New York. Additionally, the partisan restructuring of the Supreme Court demands that we take no State protections for granted any longer. After passing my Reproductive Health Act in the Assembly for several years, I firmly believe this is the year that the newly-seated Senate will join us in truly protecting women's health and autonomy, and respect the decisions made by pregnant individuals.

Street Safety

One of the most shocking failures of past Senate leadership was their refusal to reauthorize and modestly expand New York City's school zone speed camera program. Despite a massive outpouring of local support and empirically-backed findings of the success of this program in slowing motorists down, the prior Senate majority decided to play politics with the safety of school children. I will make certain that this bill passes the Assembly for a third year in a row, and I eagerly await this bill to be signed into law.

A Clean Environment

With a science-denying Federal Administration that does not believe in climate change, it is incumbent upon states to lead in the effort of being responsible stewards of our planet. I fully expect the Assembly to pass for the fourth time the Climate and Community Protection Act, which boldly commits New York to reducing all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Additionally, there are many targeted approaches to protecting the environment that should be taken. Over the past few decades, we have systematically removed lead contaminants from our environment, most notably from gasoline and paint. Yet lead remains the most used material in the manufacture of ammunition. Shrapnel from lead bullets ends up in the food supply for humans and wildlife alike, and stray bullets are left behind in the land and bodies of water. I will continue my push to forbid the use of lead ammunition on state land, and this year I will also author new legislation calling for a complete ban on the use of lead ammunition statewide.

Any discussion of environmental protection must also include the protection of wildlife. The frenzied multiplication of high rise towers, especially with reflective glass facades, has put enormous stress on bird populations. In response to this threat to our ecosystem's pollinators and insectivores, I will be making my Bird Friendly Glass Bill a priority this year. This bill reasonably requires all new building construction and substantial reconstruction to utilize bird collision deterrence measures in their designs. There are a wide variety of available methods of accomplishing this, and doing so need not cost more than unfriendly bird design.

Protecting Neighborhood Identity

The unique characteristics of our neighborhoods have undergone drastic changes over the years. The challenges our communities face are complex, and include a shrinking stock and rising cost of affordable housing, commercial rent speculation, and the straining of municipal

services due to overdevelopment. This legislative session, I will prioritize legislation intended to address these issues.

As a part of the larger conversation surrounding affordable housing, I look forward to working with my Senate colleagues to ensure the Loft Law is amended to make certain people living in illegally converted units are able to stay in their homes while the units are brought into compliance with safety codes.

To combat the strains of overdevelopment on our neighborhood services, I will be advocating for my School Impact Fee Bill. This bill would require developers of non-senior housing to pay a fee for every unit developed in the City of New York, to be used to build the school space necessitated by those additional units.

In an effort to push back on the commercial rent speculation that has blighted swaths of our streets with vacant storefronts, I will be authoring legislation to assess a fee on landlords who are comfortable leaving abandoned storefronts empty as they wait for the next large chain store to move in. Commercial real estate speculation is detrimental to our communities, and such legislation will dissuade landlords from engaging in this practice while also raising revenue that would be used to support small businesses.

In addition to these priorities, there is much more I am excited to accomplish this coming year. A new Senate majority breathes new life into many important advances for New Yorkers that have stalled over the years, including a fair congestion pricing plan; strengthening gun safety laws; election reforms, including early voting and same day registration; and many others. I will be sure to provide updates as the legislative session progresses.



I was pleased to attend, with Senator Hoylman, the opening of the new Lenox Health Greenwich Village physicians practice annex at 7 Seventh Avenue, where along with colleagues and community members, we welcomed the expansion of much-needed health services in our neighborhood.

Time to Pass GENDA

As we enter a new legislative session, it's more important than ever for the state to pass the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA). The Trump administration has repeatedly threatened to dismantle the few protections for transgender people that were established under President Obama, proposing that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) roll back protections for transgender, non-binary, and intersex people by establishing a legal definition of gender as being binary (male/female) and determined by the genitals one is born with or genetic testing. Internationally, the Trump administration has lobbied for the re-writing of United Nations human rights documents so that they replace the word "gender" with the word "women", again excluding transgender and non-binary people from UN human rights protections. These changes would exclude transgender and non-binary people from Title IX and UN human rights protections, and is a cruel attempt to enshrine discrimination against these communities through an erasure of their very existence.

Transgender and non-binary people have fought for generations to have their existence and humanity acknowledged. GENDA would ensure that at least in New York State, gender identity and expression would be a protected class in the State's human rights and hate crimes laws and prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and other areas. It is imperative that we pass it and ensure that the transgender and non-binary members of our community have access to the essential protections they need to assure their safety and wellbeing.

Upcoming Changes to the L Train in 2019

Beginning on April 27th, 2019, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) will temporarily close the L Train between Eighth Avenue in Manhattan, and Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn in order to repair the Canarsie Tube under the East River which was badly damaged during Superstorm Sandy. Currently, the MTA anticipates these repairs to be completed in 15 months and will implement a temporary Alternative Service Plan (ASP) only during that time to ensure that commuters can still travel from Brooklyn to Manhattan and along the 14th Street corridor with as little disruption as possible. This repair is necessary to maintain the greater subway system that serves the entire City and repair a vital piece of public infrastructure.

In Lower Manhattan, our community will feel a number of distinct changes and see an increase in pedestrian, cyclist, and bus traffic as a result of the temporary closure and the implementation of the ASP. City, State, and Federal elected officials have been involved in the community outreach process in anticipation of the closure at every step of the way since the MTA first announced the need for the repairs. Beginning last summer, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer convened an L Train Shutdown Task Force which holds regular meetings and brings together elected officials, appropriate City agencies including the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB), Department of Sanitation (DSNY), and Emergency Services.

Some specific changes in the ASP include:

- Select Bus Service (SBS) on 14th Street that will stop at all L Train Stops
- 4 bus routes from Brooklyn to Manhattan (L1, L2, L3, & L4)
- Bike lanes on 12th (eastbound) & 13th (westbound) Streets
- Air quality monitoring at key points in Manhattan

As I understand it, the MTA will have mobile stations in Manhattan and Brooklyn to give more information to commuters and local residents in the coming months. It should be noted that all elements of the ASP are currently temporary, and if any of those elements are potentially made permanent, they would go through the typical public process before a community board. For more information about the L Train Reconstruction Project please visit the MTA website.

The Tech Industry's Unknown Effect on New York City

Last month, we learned that Governor Cuomo negotiated a deal to welcome Amazon's 2nd headquarters to New York City. However, there are serious questions regarding giving a very profitable company nearly \$3 billion in government provided tax breaks and incentives, and effectively, voiding any public process in the construction of their large development in Queens. Despite New York City always being an obvious contender for another headquarters for Amazon, with an existing public transit system, booming tech industry, and young highly-skilled workforce, the "bidding process" of attracting an out-of-state business meant ceding taxpayer dollars to make it easier for Amazon to come to New York, despite the enormous tax cuts already provided to corporations by the Federal Government.

Nonetheless, bringing Amazon to the City will spur further tech development and ensure that the fastest growing sector of the United States economy maintains a permanent foothold in this City. However, there are a number of issues with the growth of any industry that can negatively affect local communities and harm the quality of life of long-term residents. Not all tech companies that move to or expand in New York City will bring office workers who contribute to our local economies and commute during the work week. In fact, Airbnb is a tech company that operates with offices in New York City, but also has a business model that removes affordable apartments from an already tight housing market. Similarly, Uber has offices in the City, but also employs drivers as private contractors, never providing benefits and obviating the medallion permit system for taxi cabs, thus adding to the private traffic congestion on New York City streets.

There are currently tentative plans for Google to expand further in our community to the 550 Washington-St. John's Terminal redevelopment that will begin construction in 2019. Generally, Google has been a



In November, I joined colleagues and school community members and students for a rally to save P.S. 150-Tribeca Learning Center at Independence Plaza North.

good actor and has brought well-paying, high-quality jobs to New York City. However, the 550 Washington site is a disappointment for the community after the building was sold following the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and air-rights sale, reverting to an alternative plan which the community never saw or had an opportunity to opine upon. Our community will not get affordable housing as initially expected, but will still see an influx of commuters making use of already overcrowded local infrastructure. It remains to be seen if any other community givebacks will be realized as plans at 550 Washington progress.

For years the New York City and US economies depended on Wall Street and the Finance Industry for direct employment, capital growth, and ancillary careers. We are now seeing a shift to a similar dependence on the Tech Industry as an employment and capital generator. In anticipating this shift, New York State made direct investments that brought more tech jobs to the state as well as invested in education opportunities that solidified a tech sector as part of the permanent economy in New York. The Cornell Tech Campus on Roosevelt Island is an example of the positives of this expansion in bringing tech jobs, education opportunities, and employment to the City. Additionally, companies like Facebook, Twitter, and others have repurposed existing office space that may otherwise be vacant and generated more permanent employment to the City and State.

Although we do not yet know the extent of the impact that Amazon's move to New York City will have on the local economy, we can be certain that the negative consequences of this development we already see will only worsen. For example, Long Island City, Astoria, and Woodside/Sunnyside have already seen dramatically escalating housing costs and a loss of reliable transit infrastructure. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that a majority of the new jobs will go to existing residents, or that the benefits of new employment will outweigh the cost on local infrastructure—primarily when the City and State gave tax breaks and incentives to attract the jobs originally.

Development and growth at all costs is not always the answer to building a prosperous society in the future. This mentality only further detracts from any advocacy for public assets like schools, parks, public infrastructure, and mixed-income communities. As we see further economic growth while the demands on societal equity worsen, we must work to ensure that we do not sacrifice our best assets to further enrich companies like Amazon, and be more deliberate in evaluating the impact of a quickly growing Tech Industry in New York City.

Spotlighting CUNY and SUNY Programs and Opportunities

Education is the golden ticket to upward mobility in life. As Chair of the Higher Education Committee in my 11th year advocating for The City University of New York (CUNY) and The State University of New York (SUNY), I look forward to continuing to work toward ensuring the next generation of thought leaders have the opportunities and resources necessary to thrive in a competitive and innovative society.

During a recent tour of the Advanced Science Research Center (ASRC) at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, I saw firsthand some of the groundbreaking and exciting scholarship taking place at these academic institutions. The ASRC hosts cross campus research collaborations with other institutions, with some of their work focused on advancing nanophotonic and electromagnetic research to advance wireless communications, radar technology, optical circuits and optical computing with the help of a recent five-year \$7.5 million award from the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research.

The depth of opportunities at CUNY's 23 campuses and SUNY's 64

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campuses is vast with a plethora of programs, research projects, study abroad opportunities, on-site housing options, doctoral and master's degree programs, online degrees and certificates available for freshmen and returning adult learners. For the top 10 percent of high school students in the City, there are also scholarship opportunities in the New York State Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Incentive Program (STEM) that provide full tuition for qualifying individuals demonstrating a commitment to pursuing a STEM education.

In the next few newsletters, I will highlight some of the opportunities CUNY and SUNY provide to demonstrate the quality of education our institutions have to improve the lives of students, and benefit both the City and the State. To explore New York State's scholarship programs, visit: <https://www.hesc.ny.gov>.

Promoting the Importance of Vaccines

In October, I hosted a well-attended flu shot event for members of the community. I host these events each year, in part, to raise awareness of the importance of vaccines. It provides an opportunity to educate the public on the benefits of being vaccinated against potentially harmful illnesses. We all will recall the resurgence of some diseases as a result of individual decisions based on pseudoscientific or partisan "studies" that undermine the health of the general public. As our society has been able to largely eradicate many deadly diseases, perhaps people are too distant from the harm caused by such illnesses, which can lead to complacency in addressing them through science-based vaccinations.

In 1918, the nation saw one of the deadliest flu epidemics in history infecting nearly 500 million people, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Throughout history, after experiencing outbreaks of measles, mumps and tetanus, and engaging in scientific medical research, we have learned the importance of vaccines in stopping deadly outbreaks. In order to ensure that our society stays free of the resurgence of these diseases, vaccinations should be widely administered and supported. I will continue to do

all I can to ensure that the public's safety is maintained throughout the City and State.

Property Tax Escalations for Overburdened Long-Time Property Owners

Many members of our community are struggling against ever increasing property tax assessments due to real estate speculation and the constant flipping or development of properties for luxury residential units or homes. It is evident that this problem is overburdening long-time residents, typically seniors, who have owned their homes, condos, or apartments, and are struggling to cope even with programs like the Senior Citizen Homeowners Exemption (SCHE) or the School Tax Relief Program (STAR). In several instances, commercial properties, adjoining walk up apartment buildings, or townhomes have been purchased, combined and then converted to single-family homes in excess of 15,000 square feet. In addition to the number of new luxury condos that begin selling at roughly \$5 million, these instances do drive up property tax assessments and do ultimately hurt long-time residents.

New York City should be helping to protect the housing stability of long term residents, including owners. In November, I called on the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget to overhaul property tax escalations for overburdened long-time property owners in order to alleviate this community issue. I urged the office to consider a circuit-breaker tax structure through which owners, under certain circumstances, are not unduly burdened with an insurmountable tax assessment. These triggers could include income, age, or length of ownership. It seems as though anyone who has owned their home for 30 years should have the right to remain living in it as desired without threats of unreasonably high and outrageous tax assessments. In an effort to ensure that the City is diverse and has attractive mixed income neighborhoods that are vibrant, rather than rich or poor enclaves, there should be some resolution to this issue.

853 Broadway, Suite 2007, New York, NY 10003



NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

ASSEMBLYMEMBER
66TH DISTRICT
NEW YORK CITY

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email glickd@nyassembly.gov

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Thoughts on Congestion Pricing

While there are many moving parts to the discussion, and no final plan is available as of this writing, there is no question that our mass transit system is in desperate need of major and ongoing funding. Mass transit is the circulatory system of our city and without a healthy properly functioning one, our city can't survive.

It is equally true that the congestion in our streets is unhealthy, both from the point of view of air pollution and because of dangerous driving. The stress engendered by not being able to move leads to frustration and road rage. Our streets must be made less crowded and less treacherous. The advent of ride hailing apps, without any restriction on the number of cars they could employ, has been a terrible mistake and has added to the traffic burden.

Whether there are tolls extended to other East River crossings, surcharges on vehicles or other measures, or most likely a combination of many different elements, the need for additional mass transit support is evident to everyone.



It was an honor to join Senator Kavanagh and Councilmember Chin as Lt. Governor Hochul announced \$16 million in federal funding to provide free civil legal services throughout New York State to people who've experienced domestic violence.