

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

Reports to the People of the 81st Assembly District

Este noticiario está disponible en español en nuestro sitio Web o en nuestra oficina.

District Office: 3107 Kingsbridge Avenue, Bronx, New York 10463 • (718) 796-5345

Temporary Office Hours during COVID-19 are Monday-Thursday from 10am-3pm. Appointments strongly preferred and will be outdoors only.

Albany Office: 831 Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12248 • (518) 455-5965

Email: DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov

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

BE SAFE. WEAR MASKS. GET TESTED. AVOID CROWDS.

Dear Neighbor:

This past spring, we as New Yorkers bore witness to one of the biggest tragedies in our history as the COVID-19 pandemic devastated our communities and killed thousands of our friends, family members, and neighbors. Through hard work and diligence from all of us, we were successful in significantly reducing the spread of COVID-19 in New York, and we experienced a relatively safe summer.

Now, as the weather gets cold again and people are getting fatigued from the constant health precautions, COVID-19 rates are rising once more and threatening the safety of our city.

It will take a continued effort from each and every one of us to keep our community safe from this horrible pandemic. We all need to remain diligent about washing our hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer when a sink is not available. We need to wear masks that cover our mouth and nose at all times when we are around other people – including if we are outside and near other people. We need to avoid crowds and maintain physical distancing of at least six feet, even if we are outdoors. And we need to get tested – even if we aren't symptomatic, especially if we have engaged in medium- or high-risk activities.

With new leadership arriving in Washington, I am encouraged that we may soon have a significantly improved federal response to COVID-19 that is rooted in science and does not leave each individual state to fend for themselves. It is deeply painful that more than a quarter of a million Americans have already died from COVID-19.

My office will continue working hard to make sure everyone has what they need to get through this difficult time. If you need help, contact my office and we will do our best to get you what you need.

We are stronger when we are united, and together we will get through this.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Dinowitz
Member of Assembly

Testing for COVID-19 is Widely Available in NYC

There are many options for you to get tested for COVID-19 in New York City. In addition to private clinics that are offering COVID-19 testing, NYC Health + Hospitals Corporation (the agency which oversees our public hospital system in New York City) has dozens of locations available to get both diagnostic and antibody testing. Current public health guidance in New York City is for everyone to get tested for COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they are displaying symptoms or are at increased risk.

Please be aware of the differences between various testing options. The two basic types of tests are diagnostic tests (such as the PCR nasal swab test) and antibody tests (blood test). Diagnostic tests will tell you whether or not you have an active COVID-19 infection in your body and antibody tests will tell you whether you have previously been exposed to COVID-19. Of the two types of tests, diagnostic testing is what will tell you if you are at risk of infecting other people.

If you test positive for COVID-19, there are resources available to help you keep your family or roommates protected. The NYC Test & Trace Corps will contact you if you test positive to determine if you need additional medical attention, help you arrange to isolate at home or at a free hotel, and create a list of everyone you had recent contact with. In addition to offering free hotel rooms if you test positive, they also offer 24/7 clinical support and wellness checks, help you facilitate health care and mental health services, and help you get meal and medication delivery.

To find a nearby location where you can get tested for COVID-19, please visit nyc.gov/covidtest. If you need assistance navigating this website, please contact my office.

Progress on COVID-19 Vaccines

Widespread immunization against COVID-19 is the only way we will be able to truly defeat this pandemic. At the time of this writing, there were two potential vaccines moving quickly through the development process. Once there is a safe and effective vaccine available and it is ready for distribution, I strongly urge everybody to get vaccinated in accordance with public health recommendations. If our experience with masks has been any guide, there will certainly be misinformation regarding this vaccine. If you have any questions or concerns about your health and safety regarding the future COVID-19 vaccine, please direct those to a legitimate and qualified medical professional.



COVID-19 PREVENTION

Practice the Core Four Health Tips



Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds frequently throughout the day.



Wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose whenever you are in public or around other people.



Avoid crowds (even if outdoors) and maintain at least six feet physical distancing wherever possible.



Get tested for COVID-19, even if you are not symptomatic. Essential workers and others with high risk exposure should get tested at least once per month.

FREE Notary Service

Our office provides free notary service during temporary COVID-19 office hours, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Please bring two forms of identification, at least one with your photo and signature, if you would like your signature notarized. Please be aware that all notaries are being done outdoors at this time.

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Free Kosher Meals Returning to P.S. 24

At the start of the school year, the NYC Get Food program significantly reduced the number of Community Meal Sites in our community – including the removal of all kosher meal sites in the entire borough of the Bronx.

My office pushed back against this decision and I spoke with the new director of the NYC Get Food program about the importance of having kosher meal availability in our community. I am pleased to share that following these conversations, P.S. 24 has resumed operations as a kosher Community Meal Site for those in need.

This kosher site at P.S. 24, along with all Community Meal Sites located in our public school buildings, will be open to the public from 3pm until 5pm, Monday through Friday. During this 3-5pm time, only kosher meals will be distributed at P.S. 24 (regular service will be offered for students between 9am and 12pm on school days).

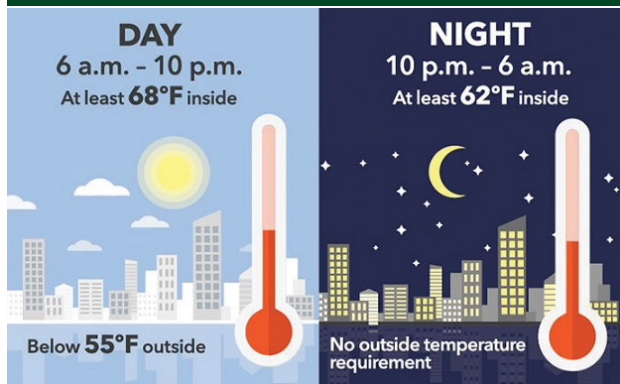
Locations of All Grab-and-Go Meal Sites Serving Our Community

- **InTech Academy M.S./H.S. 368** (2975 Tibbett Avenue, at West 230th Street)
- **International School for Liberal Arts** (2780 Reservoir Avenue, btw West 195th Street and West 197th Street)
- **P.S. 94 Kings College School** (3530 Kings College Place, btw East 211th Street and East Gun Hill Road)
- **P.S. 103 Hector Fontanez School** (4125 Carpenter Avenue, btw East 229th Street and East 230th Street)
- ***P.S. 24 Spuyten Duyvil** (660 West 236th Street, btw Hudson Manor Terrace and Independence Avenue)
*offers kosher meals only

All Community Meal Sites located in our public school buildings will be open to the general public from 3pm until 5pm, Monday through Friday. Students or their parents/guardians are able to pick up meals from any Community Meal Site from 9am to 12pm on school days. All Community Meal Sites also offer halal options. Please be aware that they will not be open on Christmas Day (12/25), or New Year's Day (1/1). They will be open on Christmas Eve (12/24), and December 28th-31st (including New Year's Eve).

For information about the location of food pantries, grocery stores, Community Meal Sites, and more, please visit nyc.gov/GetFood or contact my office for assistance.

REMINDER: Heat Season is October 1 – May 31



You are entitled to a warm apartment during the winter in New York. This means that, between October 1 and May 31 of every year, your landlord must provide enough heat to keep your apartment at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit during the daytime (6am to 10pm) when the outside temperature is below 55 degrees and at least 62 degrees Fahrenheit during the nighttime (10pm to 6am) regardless of the outdoor temperature. You are also entitled to hot water of at least 120 degrees Fahrenheit year-round.

If you are not receiving sufficient heat, I recommend taking the following steps:

- Record your apartment temperature using a standard room thermometer.
- Check that all windows are closed and remove or seal window air conditioner units.
- Talk to your building superintendent about the lack of sufficient heat or hot water.
- File a complaint with 311 (by telephone or online) each day that you do not have enough heat or hot water in your apartment. New York City will send an inspector to verify the complaint. If you do not hear from an inspector, please contact NYC Housing Preservation & Development, Division of Code Enforcement at 212-863-7050 for the Bronx office.

If these steps do not resolve the problem, please contact my office for further assistance at 718-796-5345 or DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov.

Helping Kids Get Books at Home



Earlier this fall, I was approached at my hand sanitizer and mask giveaway outside of Kingsbridge Library and asked about getting books to send home for children at Kingsbridge Heights Community Center Early Learning Building. I was told there were kids who were doing fully remote preschool, who don't have books at home. So after a little coordination from my office, I am very pleased that we were able to get more than enough books to make sure every child at the preschool has at least one book in their home.

I want to give credit and gratitude to the Book Fairies for operating a wonderful organization that takes donated children's books and puts them in the hands of kids in high-need communities. I also want to thank Sarah Bishow, the wonderful Parks administrator at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, for helping to get these books from Long Island to the Bronx. Kudos!

Celebrating New Park Spaces in Our Community

Thank you to Council Member Andrew Cohen for his sincere and significant commitment to the parks in our community over the course of his tenure in City Hall. I was thrilled to join a half dozen ribbon cuttings for new park spaces that Council Member Cohen helped fund through the New York City Council, including new play areas and water features in Kossuth Playground, Van Cortlandt Park, and Seton Park as well as a skate area in Van Cortlandt Park.



Celebrating Our Veterans

Thank you to each and every person (and their families) who has served our country in the armed services. I was pleased to join ceremonies at Memorial Grove in Van Cortlandt Park (organized annually by veteran Herb Barret) and at Woodlawn Cemetery (organized by State Senator Jamaal Bailey and NYC Department of Veteran's Affairs, joined by Council Member Andrew Cohen).



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

New Dinowitz Law Alert #1: Court-Ordered Repairs



I am very excited to share that I have won an 18-year-long battle on behalf of tenants – and specifically on behalf of 8-year-old Jashawn Parker.

In 2002, a fire at 3569 DeKalb Avenue in Norwood devastated our community and took the life of young Jashawn. This tragedy was compounded by the fact that the landlord of this building had been fighting in court for years to avoid making necessary repairs to correct nearly 400 code violations that had been issued. Soon after this fire, I introduced legislation to establish a 60-day maximum for court-ordered repairs and require that a landlord show good cause for any extension beyond this time period.

I passed this bill in the Assembly seventeen separate times, each and every year watching the State Senate refuse to even put it up for a vote. This year, with a new majority in control of the State Senate, it passed for the first time in both chambers. Now, the Governor has signed it into law and it will take effect in mid-December.

Passing a new law does not bring Jashawn Parker back to life, but if it prevents even one more death – the tragedy at 3569 DeKalb Avenue will not have been in vain.

If you have questions about this legislation (or your own apartment conditions), please contact my office. We have decades of housing experience on my staff (Spanish language available by appointment) and if it is an issue that we cannot help resolve directly through my office, we will help you get to the resources that you need to fight for your rights.

New Dinowitz Law Alert #3 Bill to Establish Public Criteria for Accessibility Upgrades in Our Subway System



Many of you know that fighting for a fully accessible transit system has been a top priority of mine, and although the COVID-19 economic crisis has interrupted these efforts, the fight must continue. This effort largely involves the installation of elevators at subway stations, but can also include things like addressing the gap between platform and subway car, communication access for people with vision and hearing impairments, and more.

Last year, I introduced legislation to create public criteria for how the MTA selects subway stations for accessibility upgrades. Currently, these decisions are often made largely based on the cost of the upgrades – leaving people in certain neighborhoods and institutions stranded and isolated. I am excited that my bill has been signed into law.

In light of the current fiscal crisis at the MTA, I believe it is even more important than ever before to have an equitable and transparent decision-making process about which stations get upgraded for accessibility first. I will keep fighting to make sure the commitments to install elevators at Mosholu Parkway (4 train), West 242nd Street (1 train), and East 241st Street (2 train), among other locations, are realized as quickly as possible for our community.

Continuing to Fight for Universal Health Care in NY



The need for universal healthcare has never been more evident than it is now. We are living through the worst public health crisis in modern history, but even a global pandemic does not impact all New Yorkers equally. The same demographic groups which have been disproportionately impacted by obesity, asthma, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. We will get through this pandemic, but we urgently need to make fundamental changes to our healthcare system to eliminate these demographic disparities in health outcomes.

The New York Health Act would create a universal single payer health plan to provide comprehensive health coverage for all New Yorkers. It is legislation that has been continually developed and improved over the course of decades, with extensive input from a multitude of stakeholders. It is one of the earliest bills I remember signing onto when I first was elected to the New York State Assembly. As often as I have voted for this bill in the Assembly, the State Senate has never so much as held a floor vote. This needs to change in 2021.

New Dinowitz Law Alert #2: Auto-Renewal Contracts



Starting in early 2021, you will have a much easier time cancelling unwanted automatically renewing subscriptions (such as magazines or gym memberships). I am very excited that another of my bills has been signed into law this week which places restrictions on auto-renewal contracts.

Here is a summary of the changes that my law makes to these types of contracts:

- If you signed up online, you must be able to cancel online.
- Regardless of how you signed up, there has to be a quick and easy way to cancel (such as a toll-free telephone number or email address).
- Affirmative consent to terms of agreement for automatic renewal or continuous service offers must be clearly presented.
- Any “free” giveaway (goods, wares, merchandise, or products sent to you) must be unconditional unless you gave your affirmative consent to enter into an auto-renewal contract.
- If somebody violates these protections, the NYS Attorney General is empowered to seek an injunction and courts can impose civil penalties for intentional violations.

Protecting consumers has long been a top priority of mine in Albany throughout my tenure as your Assemblyman, and I will continue to fight for more reforms that help you keep your hard-earned money in your pocket.

Keeping Our Communities Safe Requires a Strong Justice System



Following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, we witnessed an immense outpouring of energy from a broad cross-section of society with a shared interest in enacting basic policing reforms that are aimed at restoring trust between police officers and the communities they protect. Although rhetoric has clearly been heated on either side of the issue, there is a large amount of common ground among the majority of people.

The New York State Legislature passed ten bills in mid-June, each of which I voted for. Some people have suggested that these bills are somehow anti-law enforcement, however I reject that argument as baseless rhetoric. These laws will strengthen ties between the community and the police.

I have always worked hard to build strong working relationships with the police and I wholeheartedly support the good work of the NYPD and do not support eliminating its budget. However, I do think there are some core adjustments that we must make. We should be investing in expanded community policing efforts (such as assigning more Neighborhood Coordination Officers) using money that is currently spent on military-grade weaponry. There should be clear accountability structures so that those who do something wrong actually face the consequences of their actions, regardless of whether they are civilians or police officers. The best way to support law enforcement workers is by helping to rebuild trust.

Utility Reform: Restore Power to the People (Faster)



Most of you probably noticed that your Con Edison bill went up this year. That's because they were approved for a three-year rate hike in January by the New York State Public Service Commission, which is the state entity that regulates utility providers in our state. Yet, despite the extra money that working families are sending to this \$58 billion-dollar corporation every month, utility service is not getting more reliable. We have seen on numerous occasions in the past several years power outages after storms that last for days or weeks. We get threatened with rolling blackouts during heat waves if we don't turn our air conditioners off. We lose hundreds and thousands of dollars of spoiled food and medication because Con Edison doesn't provide enough support for utility consumers during emergencies.

It is readily apparent that our public utility system is not working as it needs to. In addition to my longtime fight to create an independent, statewide Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate in New York State, I have also introduced a new pair of bills to better protect consumers during power outages such as what happened after Tropical Storm Isaias. One bill would establish a utility consumer's bill of rights during a power outage – which would cover things like monetary reimbursement, providing customers with lifesaving equipment, and distribution of dry ice and charging stations. The other would increase penalty maximums against utility providers by a factor of 20 when they fail to uphold their obligation to provide reliable power to utility consumers. The climate is changing and storms are getting more intense and more frequent. We need to ensure that our power infrastructure is resilient and responsive to public needs.

How to Contact Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz for Help

For my entire tenure as your Assemblyman, I have made helping constituents resolve their problems a top priority of my office. Even amidst a global pandemic, my office has been working harder than ever to help make sure people have the resources they need to endure the ongoing crises.

My community office, located at 3107 Kingsbridge Avenue, has reopened for certain in-person services (pending changes in public health guidance for offices) on a limited basis from Monday through Thursday, 10am to 3pm. Please be aware that we are conducting all services outdoors at this time, rain or shine. Appointments are strongly preferred, especially if you need help to review documents (such as for SCRIE or STAR applications, housing complaints, or lease renewals). We will make photo copies of the documents you bring, return the originals to you, and discuss your case by telephone.

E-Mail Address: DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov

We can also be reached by telephone or email at any time. There is staff available to answer phone calls from Monday-Thursday from 10am to 3pm, or you can always leave a voicemail with your name, address, and telephone number as well as a brief description of what you need help with. If you are emailing us, please also be sure to include your name and address so that we can expedite our assistance.

Telephone Number: 718-796-5345

Left Turn Signal Arrives at West 231st Street and Riverdale Avenue

The intersection of Riverdale Avenue and West 231st Street is now safer for drivers and pedestrians alike after the NYC Department of Transportation installed a left-turn signal for southbound traffic along Riverdale Avenue. I have long fought for this traffic signal, and last year we got DOT to agree to install the left-turn signal. Although the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic clearly delayed the installation efforts, it is wonderful news that this light is now operational.

Previously, southbound traffic turning left onto West 231st Street would frequently make aggressive turns to beat oncoming traffic – despite the fact that pedestrians simultaneously had a walk signal across West 231st Street. This often resulted in close calls where pedestrians would have to dodge a turning car or a car would have to slam on the brakes with northbound traffic barreling towards them.



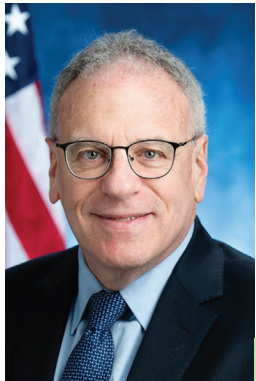
Record-Setting Voter Participation in 2020

A record number of voters went to the polls this year, with turnout nationally surpassing 150 million people. In New York State, voter participation was higher than ever, and I believe this is in large part a result of our efforts in 2019 and 2020 to remove barriers to vote. We enacted early voting, giving voters ten different days to cast their ballots and making it easier for working people to find time to participate. I passed a law to temporarily expand absentee ballot eligibility to all who are afraid of catching or spreading a disease – resulting in over two million New Yorkers requesting absentee ballots in the November election alone.

But our work doesn't stop here. We still need to pass a constitutional amendment so that my changes to absentee ballot eligibility are enshrined permanently with no-excuse absentee voting. We need to shorten the deadline for new voters to register before an election – potentially even registering on the same day as the election. We need to remove the postage requirement for absentee ballots, increase the number of early voting sites and ballot drop boxes, and expand online voter registration.

The results are clear: when our elections are inclusive, democracy wins.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz
3107 Kingsbridge Avenue • Bronx, NY 10463



Assemblyman
**Jeffrey
Dinowitz**

WINTER 2020

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Remembering Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

This year, we lost a tremendous New Yorker and asset to our nation with the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg was a transcendent and inspirational figure in the American judicial system, and we should be proud of the legacy she built and has left for the next generation of New Yorkers. After her death, I gathered at the Bronx Courthouse with my fellow Bronx leaders to commemorate her life and the incredible contribution she made to our society.

