



Assemblywoman

# Joan L. Millman

*Reports to the People*

SUMMER 2010

Serving the neighborhoods of Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Heights, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Columbia Waterfront, DUMBO, Fulton Ferry Landing, Gowanus, Park Slope and Vinegar Hill

Dear Neighbor,


As this newsletter goes to deadline, the situation with New York State's budget is still tenuous. In late June, the Assembly completed a budget and passed revenue legislation to keep our state government operating. Several new revenue streams were created, including raising the tax on cigarettes and forcing hedge fund managers living outside of the state to pay the same tax on earnings as those living in New York. Thanks to these changes, the Assembly budget preserved funding for student MetroCards and other important programs. However, the road ahead is unsure. The Senate still needs to agree on revenue-raising measures, and the Governor ultimately will need to approve these measures as well. One thing you can be sure of is my commitment to creating a fair and fiscally-sound budget with the least impact to the services on which New Yorkers depend.

I am concerned that the federal government's contribution to Medicaid could be several million dollars less than the expected \$1 billion. New York State benefits from this grant, which guarantees an enhanced rate of much-needed federal matching funds. If the grant from the federal government is cut, it could lead to an even bigger budget gap. It is important that New York State has a budget in place and is finally beginning to address long term solutions to our budget woes. For example many upstate prisons with fewer and fewer prisoners remain open at great cost to the state. This year we closed just two of these facilities; more need to be shut down. (An example of this type of wasteful spending closer to home is the Brooklyn House of Detention.) Another example is the geographic subdivisions of towns, villages, cities, and hamlets which need to be examined as another way to save tax dollars. Several years ago, Former Governor Spitzer suggested a review of these overlapping entities within New York State. Sharing duplicate services is another method of saving tax payer dollars. Our state needs to cut out all wasteful spending!

I have just finished my first year as Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Election Law, and the Committee has accomplished a great deal. In January of this year, both houses passed sweeping ethics and campaign finance reform legislation. This measure included stricter campaign finance rules and greater penalties for violations, increased disclosure of outside income for legislators, enhancements to the lobby law, and a strengthening of both legislative and executive oversight. I led the floor debate on the Board of Elections portion of the reform package. But the Governor decided to veto the legislation saying it did not go far enough! So we are back to the drawing board and readying a presentation for the next governor. I have chaired six full committee meetings, producing several bills which have already become law. Sixteen bills have passed both houses and signed into law by the Governor. I held two public hearings in New York City. As a result of discussions with the New York City Board of Elections, a clear, concise pamphlet explaining the new voting machines has been created. I will be hosting several events to demonstrate the optical scan voting machines. For a copy of the new pamphlet, or for details about upcoming public demonstrations, call my office at 718-246-4889. This new system is simple to use, just different from the old lever machines. If possible, I encourage you to attend one of the demonstrations and see for yourself.

I wish you and your families a happy, healthy summer.

Sincerely,

  
Joan L. Millman

## CONTINUING THE BATTLE TO PRESERVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

On June 27th the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) implemented devastating service cuts that unjustifiably affect Brooklyn. Many neighborhoods are no longer connected by bus. In the 52nd Assembly District the B51, B71, B37 and B75 buses have all been eliminated. Seniors, people with disabilities and students who rely heavily on these buses are all left with no feasible alternatives. Contrary to what the MTA says, subway service does not replicate bus service. Many stations are not accessible and, in many instances, the stations that are accessible still include steps which people with disabilities cannot manage. During these difficult economic times, government has to learn how to operate more efficiently. This goes for the MTA as well. I have repeatedly urged the MTA to take full advantage of its real estate assets. The MTA sold their Atlantic Yards property for less than half of its appraised value. The MTA also rents 370 Jay Street from the city yet it sits vacant. Despite the Assembly's budget which provides the MTA an additional \$160 million dollars this year, the MTA still has enacted these cuts. I have been fighting since the cuts were first announced and you can rest assured I will continue the fight. Over the past few months this is what I have done:

- In June I attended a rally organized by a dedicated community activist to save the B71.
- I created a petition that has generated 1,080 signatures all of which have been sent directly to the MTA.
- I introduced A.3957 which authorizes the city of New York to provide for a residential parking permit system. All revenue from the permits would then be used for public transportation.
- I introduced A.10345 which would transfer money from the MTA's capital budget into its operating budget upon receipt of federal stimulus dollars.
- At a public hearing, I submitted testimony once again calling on the MTA to explore all revenue streams in an attempt to avoid these cuts.
- In January, I organized a rally to protest the cuts to our bus service where I was joined by all the area's elected officials and concerned community members.

I am now exploring the option of joining a lawsuit against the MTA stating that the MTA's service cuts violate the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The elderly and people with disabilities essentially are stranded. I am urging the MTA to thoroughly review the routes they have cut and examine the impact that lost service has created in the community.

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## Guaranteeing accessibility of new homes

It is my belief that new home construction receiving funding from state and federal subsidies should be required to be accessible to people with disabilities. Assembly Bill 9409 would do just that, making sure that the principle of visitability is extended to new home construction. Visitability asserts that new homes should be built with features that make it easier for people with mobility impairments to occupy and visit. This bill has passed in the Senate and hopefully will pass in the Assembly soon.

## Empowering community boards for rear yard and rooftop bar use

My office receives numerous complaints about noisy rear yard and rooftop bars that operate in residential neighborhoods. Currently, sidewalk cafes must get approval from the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, but there is no such oversight of backyard and rooftop use. I recently introduced Assembly Bill 11288 in response to this growing problem. This legislation would limit the hours during which an establishment serving alcohol could operate in a rear yard or rooftop to until 10:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday evenings and 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday evenings. Local community boards would be given the ability to extend hours if desired.

## Reducing pedestrian accidents

An alarming number of pedestrian injuries and deaths occur when drivers of large trucks are unable to see pedestrians crossing directly in front of the vehicle. I introduced Assembly Bill 5869 to require trucks to be equipped with "cross over" convex mirrors on the front of the vehicle. This legislation would go a long way to prevent such accidents, which in New York City caused 204 deaths and 4,698 injuries from 1994 to 2003. This bill passed the Assembly on July 1st.

## Increasing training for women to enter sustainable wage jobs

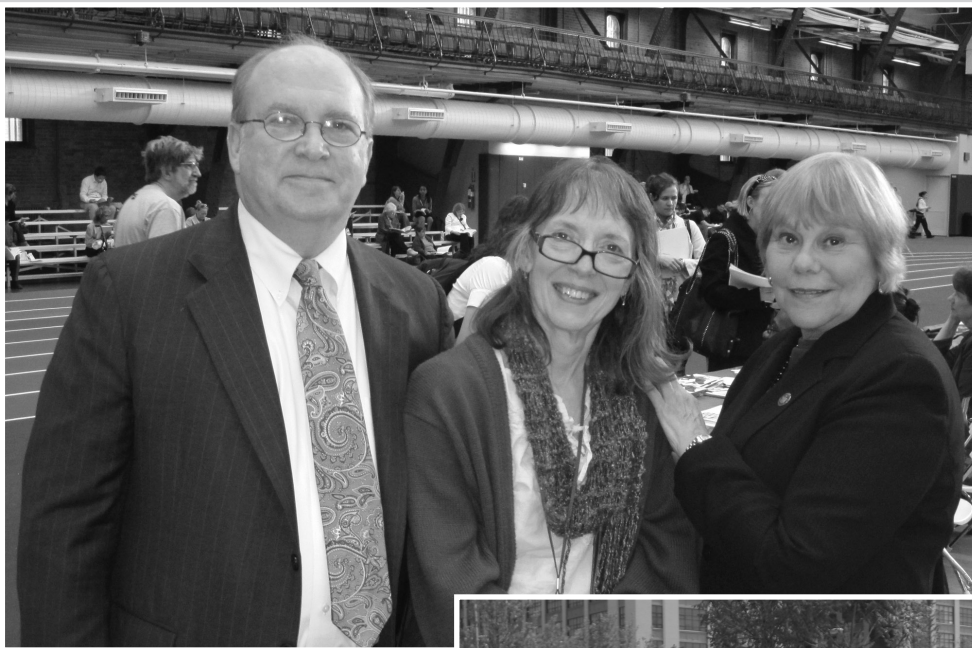
As a result of the federal welfare to work program, many women have been trained and placed in traditionally female jobs, which on average pay 20 to 30 percent less than non-traditional, sustainable wage jobs. I have introduced Assembly Bill 4096 to require that local social services' district plans for public assistance employment programs emphasize training for sustainable wage jobs and promote understanding of nontraditional employment opportunities for participants.

## Ensuring safety at Brooklyn Bridge Park

Legislation I introduced in the Assembly and Senator Daniel Squadron introduced in the Senate has been passed and signed into law by the Governor to give Park Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers the authority to enforce rules and regulations in the newly-opened Brooklyn Bridge Park. Due to the Park's joint City-State ownership, it was important this matter be clarified through legislative action. Now we can all enjoy a safe Brooklyn Bridge Park!

## Protecting information of DOE licensed employees

The New York State Department of Education is responsible for licensing over 750,000 individuals and more than 30,000 business entities; however, DOE does not guard against numerous risks associated with improper access to the registration renewal and teacher certification applications. I have introduced legislation, Assembly Bill 11251, to ensure the DOE comply with the Cyber Security Policy of the New York State Office of Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Coordination and with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard.



## Volunteer Fair

*The Community Volunteer Fair at the YMCA Sports Complex at the Park Slope Armory brought together over 800 local residents interested in volunteering with over 100 non-profit organizations seeking volunteers. I sponsored the event, along with a host of elected officials and local institutions, to foster the spirit of volunteerism even during difficult economic times. In this photo I am joined by Assemblymember Jim Brennan and local volunteer Kathy Sonderman.*

## Pier 6 is now open!

*Summer's arrived and there's a new place to cool off! I encourage everyone to visit Brooklyn Bridge Park's newly opened Pier 6. This portion of the park is home to a 1.6 acre playground and a ferry dock with weekend service to Governor's Island. Later this summer, we can look forward to the opening of a dog run, restaurant and sand volleyball courts at Pier 6.*

*There have been some concerns regarding the access to the park at Pier 6 but we have been working with NYC DOT to address them and will continue to work to ensure the park is accessible and safe for everyone.*

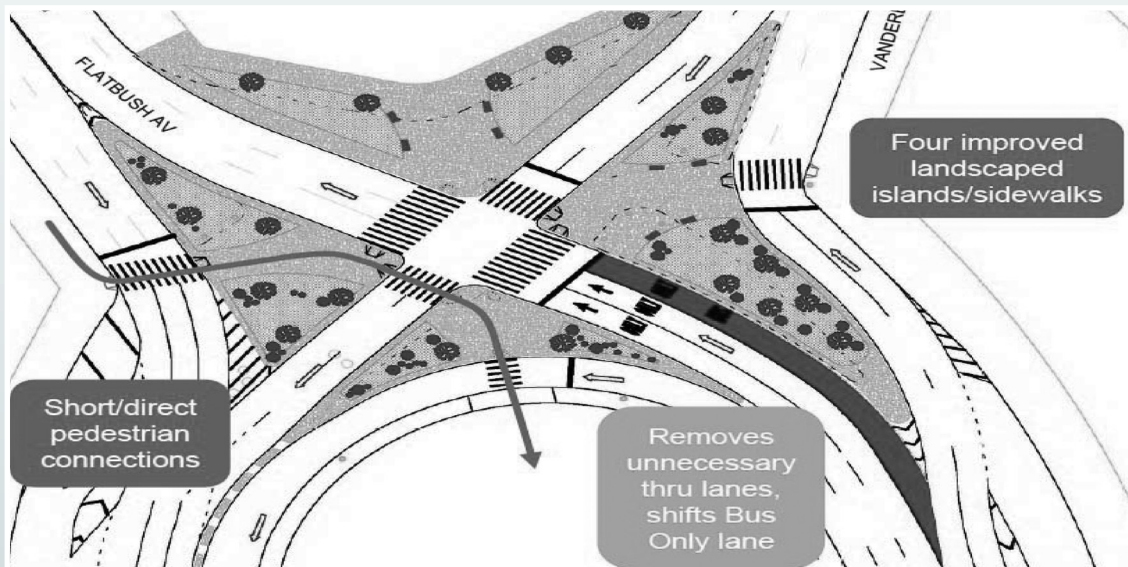


## NEW CHANGES AT GRAND ARMY PLAZA

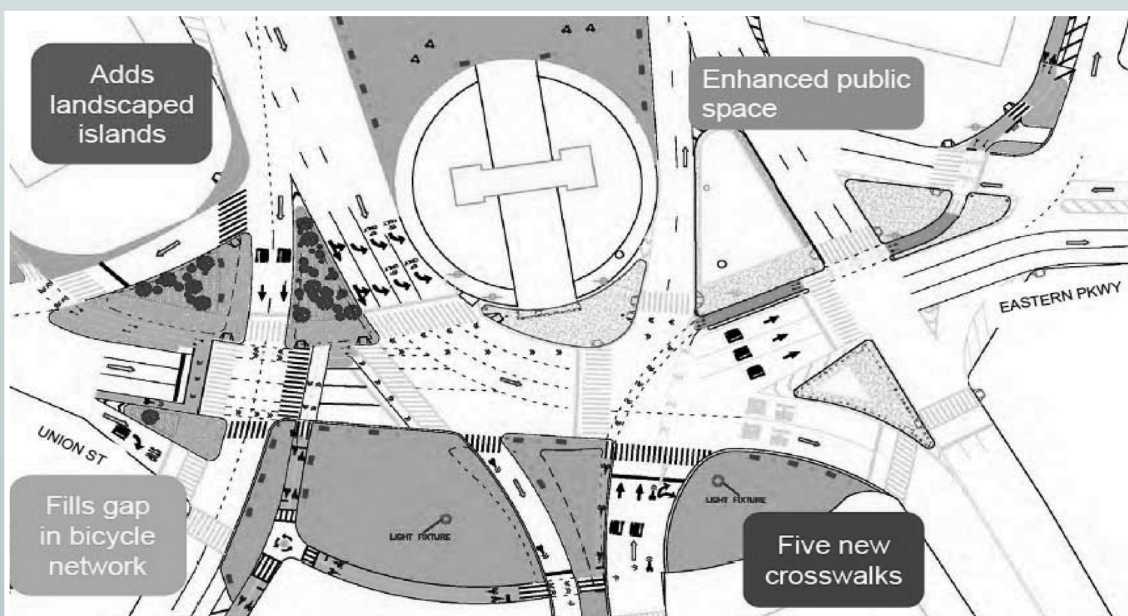
Recently, the NYC Department of Transportation, working closely with the Grand Army Plaza Coalition (GAPCo), announced a new plan to make Grand Army Plaza safer for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers alike. New crosswalks, more traffic lights, a more defined area for the greenmarket, and larger and landscaped pedestrian islands will be intro-

duced to the plaza starting in August. In addition, unnecessary thru lanes at the north and south intersections will be removed and traffic calming mechanisms in the inner circle will be installed to make the plaza safer. DOT and GAPCo must be congratulated and thanked for working together to improve traffic safety.

### Changes at the North End



### Changes at the South End



Maps courtesy of NYS DOT

## PLANNING A NEW BQE

The triple cantilever portion of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE), opened in 1954, has outlived its lifespan. The New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) is in the planning process to either repair the aging roadway, or build a new alternative, between Atlantic Avenue and Sands Street. A Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC) has been convened, with representatives of community associations, business organizations, elected officials, environmental organizations, civic organizations and public housing developments located near the project as well as members of DOT and other relevant government agencies. Federal law requires that transportation projects like the BQE reconstruction include the input of the SAC and the creation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The SAC also is respon-

sible for developing the project's goals, objectives and screening criteria; reviewing project data and findings; providing input on preliminary recommendations; and helping facilitate public outreach.

I am pleased to share that the SAC has eliminated two of the proposed alternative alignments that would have involved the use of eminent domain. I spoke out against the possible use of eminent domain because I believe no home or business should be seized in the process. The BQE can be reconstructed without resorting to any eminent domain scenario, and I am confident that DOT and the SAC will thoroughly examine all other alternatives and choose the option with the least environmental impact on the area while also ensuring that the reconstructed roadway improves safety.

Currently, there are five alternative

alignments proposed for the BQE. One option is to widen the roadway along its existing path and remove the triple cantilever formation to make it compliant with federal highway safety standards, including wider lanes and shoulders. Another option proposes to reconstruct the existing roadway. There are also three options which involve construction of a tunnel—one option would reroute the tunnel under downtown Brooklyn, one would place a tunnel along the waterfront, and one would involve constructing an outboard, underwater tunnel.

The project is expected to begin construction in summer 2017. For additional information and a detailed timeline of the review process, I encourage you to visit <https://www.nysdot.gov/bqe-downtownbrooklyn>.

## ELECTION LAW COMMITTEE UPDATE

As Chair of the Assembly's Election Law Committee, I convened a public hearing on Friday, May 14th to prepare for the New York City Board of Elections' full replacement of lever machines with accessible optical scan voting machines. At the hearing, the Committee examined New York City's specific budgetary needs to provide sufficient poll worker training on the new system and to conduct an extensive public outreach and education campaign.

The purpose of the hearing was to emphasize the importance of full funding for the NYC Board of Elections. The Board of Elections simply cannot take on the monumental task of introducing a new voting system to the public without adequate funding. I urged the City to restore all funding to the Board so that poll workers are properly trained and the public has the opportunity to be familiarized with the new optical scan machines well before this

fall's elections. Inadequately funding the Board at this time would negatively impact democracy in our City.

The Board has planned a variety of community outreach events at public libraries, senior centers and other public facilities throughout the City that will necessitate added funding.

In order to update New York's election law to be in compliance with the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law, A.11352-A, A.11353-A and A.11354-A. I introduced these bills to ensure that the transition to new optical scan voting machines goes as smoothly as possible.

I am also proud to announce that legislation I introduced to increase the opportunity for military and other special federal voters to participate in elections has been signed into law by the Governor. The legislation, A.10681, expands on federal and

state laws to allow ballots from overseas voters to be received by the board of elections 13 days after a general or special election and seven days after a primary election. Military and overseas voters also now have a choice in how they obtain voting materials, including via fax or e-mail, which helps to reduce the turn around time so the Board of Elections will receive overseas ballots and all votes will be counted.

I also introduced legislation to restrict the total amount of money Limited Liability Corporations (LLC's) can contribute to candidates, political parties and political committees in one year. Currently, LLC's can contribute up to \$150,000 combined in any one year. My legislation would require the Board of Elections to hold LLC's to the same \$5,000 limit that corporations are permitted to give in any one year. This is an important step to reduce the amount of special interest money in politics.

## SPOTLIGHT ON A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION: MARQUIS STUDIOS

Marquis Studios is a center of creative arts in Brooklyn which provides arts-in-education services to New York City public schools. For more than 30 years, Marquis Studios has been fostering a greater partnership between teaching artists and classroom teachers by providing arts programs as a supplement to traditional classroom teaching techniques. Through three cycles of 10-week residencies in schools, Marquis Studios' artists provide staff development and parent/child workshops in disciplines as diverse as puppetry, circus, mural-making, music, drawing, painting, storytelling, and movement.

Marquis Studios also provides a venue for children to display their work to the public in a professional setting. One recent program which I attended in April 2010 was KIDesign, a collaboration among three neighborhood schools, P.S. 8, P.S. 307 and P.S. 287, where students displayed the impressive art-

work they had done during a 14-week residency program with a teaching artist. The students thought about how they could improve their neighborhood by studying urban design and architecture—one project had students building scale models of a dilapidated subway station to imagine how it might be renovated and improved.

Marquis Studios serves a diverse population. The majority of students in Marquis' programs live at or below poverty level as measured by their eligibility for free lunch and breakfast programs. Many of Marquis' programs are taught in underserved inner-city areas. Over the last 31 years, Marquis Studios has taught over 220,000 students, 26,000 teachers and 9,000 parents at hundreds of schools and cultural institutions throughout New York City. To find out more about this outstanding community organization, please visit [www.marquisstudios.org](http://www.marquisstudios.org).

### The Douglass-Degraw Pool will be open for the summer!



After I joined the community and local elected officials in rallying to protest the City's plans to shutter the beloved pool, the City responded by abandoning budget cuts that would have closed the facility. The Douglass-Degraw Pool is located in Thomas Greene Park in the Gowanus neighborhood and serves a diverse population, including nearly 3,500 residents at the nearby Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens and Warren Street housing developments. The facility is also the nearest public pool for residents of Boerum Hill, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Park Slope.

### HOW TO CONTACT ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILLMAN

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