



Assemblymember
Jo Anne Simon

52nd District



June 2017

A Message from Jo Anne...

I recently introduced a gender neutral bill (A8321/S6542), sponsored by Senator Betty Little in the Senate, which would update antiquated and inaccurate language in state law relating to police officers and firefighters.

The bill would replace all instances of the words “fireman” or “policeman” with the words “firefighter” or “police officer.”

This effort would modernize the outdated language in the state statute to promote the idea that the professions of law enforcement and firefighting are not exclusive based on gender, and to reflect the current reality of the brave women who hold professions in law enforcement and firefighting.

Stamping out gender-specific language will ensure that professions that were once seen as nontraditional for women are more likely to appeal to all people, and will ensure the broad inclusion of women in every aspect of the police and fire departments.

The use of this gendered language perpetuates an outdated worldview that suggests to young girls and young boys alike that law enforcement and firefighting are only open to men. This bill acknowledges the female firefighters and police officers who risk their lives to keep us safe every day. This simple update to our state laws can cause a profound change in how we perceive these professions and can help us create a more inclusive safety force.

I was thrilled to be joined in Albany by NYC Fire Department Firefighter Jackie-Michelle Martinez and NYC Police Department Captain Lavonda Wise, who support the bill, along with the NYPD & the FDNY. Women now make up approximately 18% of the 36,000 NYPD uniformed force. Women serve as some of the highest ranking officers of the NYPD, including Deputy Commissioners and Bureau Chiefs. In addition, women represented 10% of the recent 9,000 firefighter exam applicants, up from 6% of the applicants four years ago. There are currently an all-time high of 73 women in the fire department with 7 officers.

I will be making a push for this bill and other key legislation before the end of this legislative session.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office with questions.

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DESIGN-BUILD

It's time to rebuild the BQE's triple-cantilever! I'm pleased to cosponsor bill A8134/S6427, which would allow the City to use Design-Build for major infrastructure projects, including the BQE's triple-cantilever. Design-Build will streamline the construction process by merging design and construction phases, saving both time and money.

I have long advocated for the use of Design-Build for the reconstruction of the BQE triple-cantilever, an antiquated but critical link in the Interstate Highway system that runs from Atlantic Avenue around Brooklyn Heights to Sands Street, and which significantly impacts the entire region's economy. Giving the City authority to use Design-Build will bring us into the 21st Century: permit the City to do the project, do it well, do it at a fraction of the cost of the customary NYC procurement process, and do it more safely and sustainably.

FIREARMS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

This June, New York will celebrate its first National Gun Violence Awareness Month. I sponsor a bill in the Assembly (A2977/S4363) that will establish a research institute in New York to examine the causes and impacts of firearm violence and provide evidence for prevention efforts. It is high time for New York to lead the way in conducting scientific research to better understand and prevent the gun violence that is plaguing the nation and claiming 33,000 lives each year.

Unfortunately, funding for gun violence research and prevention through the Centers for Disease Control was effectively banned more than 20 years ago. Investment in scientific research helped identify ways to reduce motor vehicle deaths, from seat belts to frontal air bags, and saved hundreds of thousands of lives without banning cars. It's time to make the same investment in firearms violence research.

New York has worked hard to prevent gun violence through the SAFE Act and community gun violence prevention programs. New York has the fourth-fewest gun deaths per capita among the 50 states. It is clear that common-sense legislation and effective community programs prevent gun violence. Nonetheless, there are troubling gaps in the law and firearm violence and its physical and social impacts remain a significant public health and safety issue. There is still much that we could learn in order to reduce gun violence and to identify areas where future legislative actions may be beneficial while respectful of constitutional rights.

California recognized that waiting another 20 years for the federal government to change course on gun violence research was no longer acceptable and in 2016 created the country's first publicly funded firearm research center, funded initially with \$5 million. An institute on both coasts would enhance research efforts and make a real difference in prevention initiatives. We owe it to the victims of gun violence and their families to do a better job in understanding the science behind gun violence and preventing more families from suffering the same fate.

DYSLEXIA BILL

The Assembly unanimously passed a bill I sponsor (A8262/S6581) that will improve awareness of and understanding of Dyslexia, a common learning disability, which will in turn help more students learn to read and be successful students.

For decades, school districts believed that schools were not allowed to use the word “Dyslexia” in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), but could use only the broad classification “Learning Disability” from the federal Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA). However, federal regulations contained no such restriction and indeed, no similar restriction existed in connection with other IDEA disability classifications; schools freely named specific visual or mobility impairments, such as macular degeneration, or muscular dystrophy, or cerebral palsy. While the U.S. Department of Education has issued regulatory guidance clarifying the ability to use this term, this has still been an area of confusion.

This bill instructs the State Department of Education to develop a guidance memorandum for schools consistent with the federal requirements and inform schools that they may include the names of specific learning disorders, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia or dyscalculia in IEPs. This will in turn help schools provide targeted language-based interventions and help more students learn to read and be successful students.

My sincere thanks to Assemblymember Catherine Nolan, the teachers, schools, experts, advocates including Everyone Reading and Decoding Dyslexia, and most importantly all of the Dyslexic individuals who have worked tirelessly to improve understanding of Dyslexia.

ASTHMA BILL

I am thrilled that the Assembly passed my asthma legislation A947/S5770. This measure will provide for an investigation into the prevalence of asthma and pulmonary disorders in the Borough of Brooklyn, which has a particularly high incidence of such cases.

This bill would help the state to better understand and address the high rates of asthma and other pulmonary disorders in Brooklyn. The New York State Department of Health would provide the Governor and the Legislature with a remedial plan that addresses the needs of high risk neighborhoods. The plan would examine the inequities in income, housing, race and ethnicity, the proximity to major sources of air pollution, including but not limited to, highly trafficked roadways and solid waste processing facilities and an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing medical facilities in the treatment of these pulmonary disorders.

Asthma alone affects more than one million people in New York State. Recent studies point to a strong connection between high asthma rates and socioeconomic status, and several Brooklyn neighborhoods have a far higher rate of emergency room visits and hospitalizations for asthma and other related pulmonary illnesses.

By giving focused study to these issues, we will be able to craft progressive policies to address and reduce the rate of these health problems. This study will also help evaluate the effectiveness of existing medical facilities.

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

The New York Health Act Ensures No One Will Be Without Healthcare: I was pleased to help pass the New York Health Act, legislation that would create a universal single-payer plan to provide health coverage to every New Yorker (A4738). The bill ensures no one will be without healthcare coverage and it puts people over profits. Now, the Senate must take up the bill.

The New York Health Act would establish a universal health care system within the state, known as New York Health, and expand coverage eligibility to include all residents, regardless of wealth, income, age or pre-existing condition. In addition, every enrollee would have access to the full range of doctors and service providers available and access to comprehensive care.

Care providers would be paid by New York Health, with no co-pays, deductibles or other charges to patients. The system would be publicly funded based on a shared 80/20 employer/employee payroll tax contribution that would be progressive and based on the amount the employee is paid. This eliminates the regressive tax of premiums, co-pays and deductibles that is currently imposed on patients. Employers would no longer be responsible for paying premiums – saving them money – and they would also no longer have to sign contracts with insurance companies and deal with the administration of health plans.

An inability to pay, or a pre-existing condition, should never stop you from going to the doctor, receiving the tests and getting the treatment that could save your life. Universal health care is both the better choice and the right thing to do. In the long run, a single-payer system not only improves care, but also saves taxpayer money.

The system that would be put in place through this bill has proven to be more cost-efficient than alternatives. In 2009, the NYS Department of Health published a report showing that a single-payer system would provide the lowest cost for universal coverage when compared with private and employer-based insurance. As a result of the federal attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and dramatically cut support for Medicaid, the possibility of millions of New Yorkers losing coverage has become a very real, life-or-death concern. The repeal of the ACA could leave as many as 2.7 million New Yorkers without health insurance coverage.

Assembly Passes Legislative Package to Support New Yorkers with Disabilities: In recognition of Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day on May 22, I helped pass an Assembly legislative package to strengthen anti-discrimination protections for New Yorkers with disabilities and ensure access to important resources. The package included bills to protect disability rights, provide equal access to the ballot, improve emergency preparedness and housing safety, support veterans, and help New Yorkers with disabilities stay in their communities.

SENIOR RESOURCE FAIR

I hope you will join me for my annual Senior Resource Fair at the end of this month. A variety of groups will be available to provide you with information on legal services, health care, government services, community resources, and more!

- **Friday, June 30th, 11am-2pm**, at St. Francis College, 180 Remsen Street (Brooklyn Heights, between Court and Clinton Streets).
- Admission and information are free, and light refreshments will be served.
- A Town Hall will take place at 12:00pm with special guests!

CONSTITUTENT CORNER: KEVON



I was delighted to meet one of my constituents from Vinegar Hill, Kevon Leary, during his recent visit to Albany. Kevon connected with mentors through the Madison Square Boys & Girls Club Navy Yard Clubhouse, and has now become a mentor himself. He has spearheaded community service projects that benefit the homeless, and has excelled in his studies--even receiving enough credits to graduate at 16! He is also a tremendous athlete.

Kevon has overcome a great number of obstacles in his life, and has grown into a kind and ambitious young man who is a role model to many in his community. He is often asked to speak to the younger students at his school and to teach classes. It is no wonder that he is a New York State Finalist for Youth of the Year. His academic successes and athleticism have paid off: he will be playing basketball and studying Sports Management at Monroe College in the fall. Good luck, Kevon!

SPOTLIGHT: NEW MATERNAL DEPRESSION CENTER

Maternal depression is one of the most common medical complications women may experience during and after pregnancy. Maternal depression includes a range of perinatal mood disorders, emotional and psychological reactions a woman may experience during pregnancy or up to a year after childbirth. This includes prenatal depression, "baby blues," postpartum anxiety, postpartum depression, and the most severe form, postpartum psychosis.

Paige Bellenbaum, Park Slope resident, recently helped open The Motherhood Center, a first-of-its kind center in the state. The center provides supportive services for new and expecting moms, including a range of treatment options for women suffering from perinatal mood disorders.

The Motherhood Center is staffed by psychiatrists, social-workers, psychologists and infant attachment therapists. It is equipped with an on-site nursery, a nap room for moms, an art therapy room, and space for individual and group therapy. It creates a comfortable atmosphere designed more like a living room than a hospital room. The center offers a range of treatment options, including a day-hospital program for women with acute postpartum depression, outpatient psychiatric treatment and medication evaluation, and workshops for new and expecting parents.

Paige is the center's first Program Director and is a licensed social worker, postpartum depression survivor and advocate, and co-author of New York State's postpartum depression legislation. Best of luck to Paige in this important endeavor to provide critical services to expectant and new mothers.

To learn more about The Motherhood Center, go to www.themotherhoodcenter.com or call 212-335-0034. The center is located at 205 Lexington Ave., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10016.

Please know that if you need help, you are not alone. You may contact the Motherhood Center, or you may contact the Postpartum Resource Center of New York State's toll-free helpline: [855-631-0001](tel:855-631-0001). Help is available in both English and Spanish.

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

Avoid the Summer Brain Drain! Once again, I will be sponsoring a Summer Reading Challenge. All elementary and middle school students are invited to participate. It will not only be fun, but they will return to school in September with those “learning muscles” well-toned. You may contact my office to request a brochure and a summer reading calendar.

SOUTH BROOKLYN FERRY UPDATE

It's open! On June 1st, the new South Brooklyn Route of the NYC Ferry officially launched, and now Brooklyn residents can use it to go to work, school, and to explore the waterfront. Each ride will cost the same as a subway ride. The South Brooklyn route connects Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Red Hook, Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier 1 (DUMBO) and Pier 6 (Atlantic Ave.), and Wall Street, with weekend service to Governors Island. There is a new mobile application that you can use to purchase tickets. For the full list of all routes and timetables: <https://www.ferry.nyc/>.

SUMMER IS ALMOST UPON US!

Cadman Park Conservancy presents: Macbeth. Performed by Theater 2020 at Cadman Plaza Park/Brooklyn War Memorial on Saturday, June 17th, and Sunday, June 18th. Both shows begin at 6pm and are free! For more information: <http://www.theater2020.com/mainstage>.

Explore Brooklyn's beautiful parks! **Brooklyn Bridge Park** is kicking off a host of wonderful summer activities. Join them for the reopening of the pop-up pool, kayaking, movies, the Met Opera performance, Jane's carousel, an installation entitled “Descension,” and more. The park will also be adding new ping pong tables! Check out their full calendar of events: <http://www.brooklynbridgepark.org/events>.

BRIC's Celebrate Brooklyn at **Prospect Park** is back! Explore their musical and cultural events at the Bandshell this summer: <https://www.bricartsmedia.org/events-performances/bric-celebrate-brooklyn-festival>. For other events, go to: <https://www.prospectpark.org/news-events/events/>.

Portside New York's summer programs have kicked off! All of their Tanker Tours aboard the Mary A. Whalen depart from Pier 11, Atlantic Basin, in Red Hook. To learn more about Portside New York's tours, programs, and maritime education, please visit their website: <http://portsidenewyork.org/>.

Check out the **Water Front Museum** in Red Hook this summer! From performances to exhibition, and tug and barge tours, there is no shortage of exciting events happening. For a full list of events: <http://www.waterfrontmuseum.org/events>.

BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OPENS DUMBO MUSEUM

I was pleased to attend the opening for the Brooklyn Historical Society's new DUMBO Gallery. You may enter the museum at 55 Water Street or through Brooklyn Bridge Park. The inaugural exhibition, Shifting Perspectives: Photographs of Brooklyn's Waterfront, features the work of two dozen photographers whose images crisscross the Brooklyn shoreline, from Newtown Creek to Jamaica Bay. Learn more about the exhibition and learn more about the DUMBO location at <http://brooklynhistory.org/dumbo/>.

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