



Assemblymember **DAN QUART**

Reports to the People

Spring 2016



BUDGET UPDATE ■

BIG WINS FOR WORKERS IN NEW YORK

This year's budget contained some exciting wins for workers in New York. The state minimum wage, currently just \$9 per hour, will be raised to \$15. Women are more likely to be minimum wage workers than men, and this raise will help to give low-income, female-headed households a needed boost in earnings. Almost a third of minimum wage workers are single parents, and giving these mothers and fathers a wage increase will help them provide necessities to their families. Raising the minimum wage helps to ensure that those who work

full-time are able to earn a living wage—a full-time worker at the new minimum wage will be able to support a family of five above the poverty line.

Raising the minimum wage will also help to reduce the inequality between middle-income and low-income households. In New York City, the series of increases will begin at the end of 2016, first raising the wage for employees at large businesses to \$11 an hour and employees at small businesses to \$10.50 an hour. The wage increase will continue gradually, giving business owners ample time to adjust to the new minimum wage. All New Yorkers deserve a fair wage for their hard work, and this minimum wage increase helps to provide that.



Assemblymember Quart fighting for constituents of District 73 on the floor of the Assembly Chamber.

Additionally, the budget includes the nation's most comprehensive paid family leave policy, allowing New Yorkers to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave to care for sick family members or a new child. New Yorkers can care for an ill relative or experience the joy of bonding with a newborn without adding the stress of worrying about whether their job will still be there when they are able to return. Minimum wage workers are far less likely to have paid leave provided through their job, and this new policy ensures that even low-income workers have the same access to time off as other workers in New York. Although the United States as a whole lacks a comprehensive paid family leave policy, I am proud that New Yorkers will now have a right enjoyed by workers all over the world. It's time for New York State to acknowledge and protect the needs of all workers—paid family leave is a great start.

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EXPANDING TRANSIT ACCESS:

SECOND AVENUE SUBWAY AND MORE

I am proud to report that funding of the next phase of the Second Avenue Subway construction has been restored to the budget, providing \$1 billion to see that construction continues. The Far East Side lacks vital access to transit, but this project will finally solve this problem, connecting those neighborhoods to the subway system, while also reducing overcrowding on the Lexington Avenue line. I will continue fighting to make sure this project is funded to completion.

I am also working with the MTA to bring more Select Bus Service to heavily-used bus routes, allowing East Siders to travel more easily. In addition to increasing subway access on the East Side, expanding bus rapid transit will make travel easier, more reliable, and faster. We are also working to make sure that local service and bus shelters are maintained,

ensuring that elderly and disabled New Yorkers can access the transit system. I am co-sponsoring the Move NY plan to provide for a number of changes to the transportation infrastructure in New York City and the surrounding areas. This plan includes increased and dedicated funding to these large transit projects on the East Side, as well as funding for smaller projects like bus shelters or streetscape improvements that are chosen by people in district. Whether fighting for the completion of the Second Avenue Subway, working to expand bus service, or ensuring that bus stops and subway stations are accessible to all New Yorkers, I know that transit access is an issue that affects every member of our district, and I will never stop reminding Albany of their responsibility to our city.

A WIN FOR NEW YORK WOMEN: ENDING THE TAMPON TAX

The New York State Assembly and Senate have both passed bills to eliminate the state sales tax on tampons and sanitary napkins, one of the first states in the nation to do so. For too many years, these necessities have been subject to a 4% sales tax, while other medical and sanitary products, like prescription drugs and even shampoo, have not been. A vast majority of women and girls use these products, and have no choice but to purchase them month after month. Over the course of a lifetime, this tax can add up, forcing women to pay more than men for essentials through no fault of their own. Considering the lack of pay equality, this means that women in New York paid more sales taxes with less income. In fact, taxing sanitary items places a disproportionate strain on low-income women, for whom the cost of these items represents a larger share of their income. It is wrong to tax these necessary items as if they were a luxury, and I am proud that the legislature has finally taken steps to correct this. These sanitary items are vital to the health of women and girls across the state, and this measure should reduce the financial burden associated with purchasing them. I am excited to work with colleagues in both houses and from both parties to create a version of the bill that ensures that these necessities are not subject to a burdensome tax.

At the city level, I am excited to see the City Council consider a proposal to provide sanitary products in public schools at no cost—like the elimination of the tampon tax, this move will help to make sure that young women are not unfairly charged for products that they have no choice but to use. A pilot program at a high school in Queens to provide these products at no cost proved such a success that it is being expanded to 25 other schools, ensuring that low-income students can focus on their studies, and not on paying for sanitary products. For too long, the stigma surrounding this aspect of women's health have prevented lawmakers from discussing this issue—let's continue working together to make sure that all the health concerns of all New Yorkers are treated fairly.



Assemblymember Quart discusses local issues and the state budget at a Community Board meeting.



Assemblymember Quart honors Holocaust survivor and activist Sami Steigmann at the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

KEEPING ELECTIONS FAIR FOR ALL VOTERS

In a presidential election year, voting is at the forefront of every citizen's mind. For years, I have been working to ensure fair and reliable poll sites for all New Yorkers, and 2016 is no different. From ensuring that poll sites have an adequate number of affidavit ballots to making sure that poll sites are required to provide something as basic as pens to voters, I have introduced a number of bills to make the voting process in New York fairer and more transparent for all citizens. With Senator Hoylman, I have introduced legislation that would require the Board of Elections to notify absentee voters when their ballot has been received, and how to correct any issues with it—allowing absentee voters assurance that their voices are being heard and that their votes are being counted. Because permanent absentee voters are often elderly or physically disabled, ensuring that their voice is heard should be a priority for all. I have introduced legislation with Senator Krueger that would ensure that New York City's polling sites are equipped to deal with the large number of voters in our city, making sure that voters are not penalized for living in a high-density area. The reality of living and voting in New York City must be taken into consideration when planning and equipping our polling sites.

In addition to this legislation, I have fought to keep Central Synagogue in midtown a polling location for the presidential primary and other elections this year, making sure that voters are able to continue voting at their routine polling site. Other polling sites in Manhattan already have difficulties dealing with the large numbers of voters in our city, so to lose an entire polling location would have been nothing short of a disaster. I have taken complaints about issues at polling sites seriously and continually work to make sure that the Board of Elections does not ignore the difficulties faced by voters. All New Yorkers deserve to know that their votes matter, and I will continue to work to make sure that the voting process becomes fairer and simpler.

Assemblymember Quart enjoying a presentation by some local students on ways to make our neighborhoods greener.



OPEN SPACE IN DISTRICT—PUBLIC PARKS AND MORE

With the temperature rising, we all enjoy spending more time outdoors, and in May, Poses Park at Hunter College will open again to the public, providing the East Side with more green space to enjoy. The small park, at 68th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues, has seating and outdoor art. The park is a wonderful oasis in an area of the city with far too little green and open spaces available to the public. Although many parts of our district border Central Park, public green space from Fifth Avenue to the East River has been neglected by the city for too long—East Siders deserve neighborhood parks and playgrounds as much as residents of every other part of the city. Members of Community Boards and other residents have been fighting to bring more and more public parks to our district, and I will continue to support their fight.

Once opened, Poses Park will join a number of other parks on the East Side, including St. Catherine's Park, on First Ave between 67th and 68th, Ruppert Park, on 2nd Ave between 90th and 91st, and Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, on 47th St between 1st and 2nd Ave. Many of these parks have volunteer organizations who participate in cleaning and caring for our public green space, allowing everyone the opportunity to find a sense of ownership in our shared space. During the summer, the NYC Parks Department runs a number of programs and events in public parks, and children and adults alike can take advantage of programming from movie screenings to exercise classes. Whether you would like to take advantage of the public running tracks, take your children to a playground, or just enjoy some time in the sun, I encourage everyone to stop by one of our beautiful parks this summer!

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

The East Side suffers from some of the worst air quality in the entire city. Since I was first elected, I've worked hard to harness the power of state government to improve the air quality in our area. I'm proud to have secured \$15 million in the Assembly budget to fund boiler improvements for apartment buildings and to have forced the MTA to constantly monitor air quality at all Second Avenue Subway construction sites. Building emissions remains one of the biggest contributors to pollution in New York City, though, and it's essential that we continue to make progress in cutting these emissions to truly improve our air quality.

Over the years, I've heard many frustrations from building managers, co-op and condo boards and building residents about NYSEDA's Multifamily Performance Program. While this program was designed to encourage apartment buildings to make improvements to their energy systems, the application process was arduous, especially for buildings that are upgrading their systems piece by piece, rather than all at once. Even building operators that do intend to undertake a complete renovation of their energy systems have had a difficult time finding trustworthy contractors for their project, or accessing their preferred cleaner fuels.

Over the last five years, I've worked with city and state agencies and Con Edison to make this process easier, but the restrictions of the program have limited our progress. This year, I'm happy to announce that the next generation of clean energy programs in New York State will correct this problem, allowing smaller projects to be eligible, streamlining the application process and connecting building managers with trustworthy contractors for their projects. These smart policy changes are an enormous step toward solving an intractable problem, and will make a measurable difference in the air quality in our neighborhoods.



Assemblymember

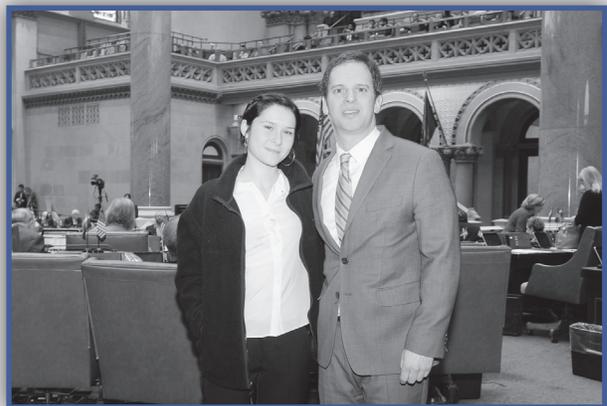
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Assemblymember Quart meets with local and even international leaders, Duncan Pegg, MP of Queensland Parliament



Assemblymember Quart welcoming Skye Lucas, local advocate for dyslexic individuals, to the Assembly chamber.