

News from Assemblymember

**LINDA B. ROSENTHAL**DISTRICT OFFICE: 230 West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 2F, New York, NY 10023

Phone: 212.873.6368 • Email: rosenhall@assembly.state.ny.us



Dear Neighbor,

Though every legislative session presents new and unique challenges, state government has been marred by a series of scandals involving a number of Albany lawmakers, which underscores the dire need for reform. As a start, we must change the way in which we finance campaigns here in New York State to ensure competitive races in which the best woman or man, and not just the one with the deepest pockets or the most funding, wins. I will continue advocating to take the corrupting influence of big money from special interests out of politics.

In addition to championing campaign finance reform, I have also been fighting for passage of the Women's Equality Act (WEA). WEA, an omnibus bill comprising 10 points that the Assembly passed in full, would bring women's rights in New York State into the 21st century.

The Women's Equality Act will allow women to achieve true pay equality by ensuring that women and men are paid equally for work of comparable worth. It will help to put an end to sexual harassment in the workplace by allowing plaintiffs' attorneys to collect attorney's fees. The WEA will strengthen New York's human trafficking law with the formation of an inter-agency taskforce on trafficking. It also will increase the penalties for trafficking, expand the definition of certain prostitution crimes and create an affirmative defense in prostitution cases that the person was coerced into prostitution. It also will make it easier for trafficking victims to access social services. The bill will stop various forms of discrimination routinely experienced by women, including: family status discrimination, income-based or source-of-income discrimination, pregnancy discrimination and housing discrimination. With respect to domestic violence, the bill will strengthen order of protection laws.

The bill would represent a sea change with respect to women's rights in this state, but the NYS Senate has refused to pass the full 10 points because of a purely ideological opposition to the last point, which would make technical changes to New York's reproductive health law by updating it to reflect the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. The women of this state deserve better, and I will continue to stand firm for the passage of the WEA.

As always, I know that I will see you around the district at the numerous street fairs, greenmarkets and other community events that are ubiquitous during the summer and fall. If you would like to reach me, please feel free to drop by my district office; you can also call or email. My staff and I are always around to help with a problem or just to talk, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Linda B. Rosenthal  
Member of Assembly — 67th AD

## New York City Public Schools to Be PCB-Free in Three and One-Half Years

After I battled the New York City Department of Education (DOE) on toxic polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) lighting ballasts, students, parents and teachers citywide have won a tremendous victory! The DOE has finally bowed to pressure and agreed to a three and one-half year citywide PCB removal plan for New York City public school buildings during mediation ordered by the court after prolonged litigation on the issue.

The City, which for years had stubbornly refused to acknowledge the known risks to students' and teachers' health posed by PCBs in the classroom, clung to a 10-year timeline to remove and replace all PCB-contaminated lighting ballasts. It was currently in year two of that program.

Since the discovery of PCB-laden caulk at P.S. 199 in my district in 2008, I have been vigorously advocating for the immediate removal of all PCB contamination from public schools, and introduced legislation to require the City to remove and replace all PCB-contaminated lighting ballasts within two years. I am so thrilled that this hard-fought battle has finally been won. All of us can finally breathe a sigh of relief, safe in the knowledge that our school buildings will not make us sick.

This a cautionary tale: it is always better to do the right thing in the first place, than to be dragged to it reluctantly, especially when it comes to the health and safety of this City's students.

## Putting the Brakes on Private Development of Public Schools and Public Housing

In a victory for Upper West Side schools, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) bowed to community pressure and announced that it would not move forward with plans for redevelopment at P.S. 191 on West 61st Street and P.S. 199 on West 70th Street.

The DOE first proposed to demolish these schools and the School of Cooperative Technical Education on the Upper East Side in an advertisement to developers in a November 2012 issue of an industry trade journal. The DOE would have leased the land to a private developer who would demolish the schools and build luxury housing with a school at the base. The plan was never about education or providing seats for our children--it was conceived as a giveaway to developers.

On the Upper West Side, we refused to stand for the City playing games with our public schools. I expressed my disgust to the DOE, and I organized a public forum with area elected officials and community

*Continued on page 3*

## Do Not Call List Update

In the last newsletter, I asked you to report to me any harassing and unsolicited phone calls you receive from companies. Your response was overwhelming! Unfortunately, it appears that hundreds of you have been harassed by these telemarketers, despite being registered for the Do Not Call List.

After I worked closely with the New York State Department of State, it opened an investigation into one of the worst offenders. I will let you know the outcome of that investigation as soon as I have more information, but please rest assured that the company is facing steep penalties.

In the meantime, I am working on tough new regulations that will protect you and your privacy. Please continue to contact my office if you receive these calls.

# ALBANY HIGHLIGHTS

## Label GMOs Because Consumers Deserve to Know

Working with advocates from across the country, I have introduced legislation that would require all food products sold in New York State that are made using genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to be labeled as such. Genetic engineering (GE) is a process by which an organism's genetic material is altered to cause changes in its development. In the United States, a variety of plants, including corn, canola, cotton, wheat, apples and strawberries, are grown using GE. It has been estimated that between 60% and 70% of all packaged grocery products contain some GMO ingredients.

The movement to label food containing GMOs has been gaining momentum, with nearly half of all states considering legislation to require GMO labeling similar to mine, and two states, Connecticut and Maine, passing laws to require GMO labeling. I believe that consumers have a right to know what they put into their bodies when they sit down for a meal, and I have every intention of making New York one of the next states in the country to require GMO labeling.



*Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal at a news conference before a hearing on her bill A.3525-A to require that food products containing GMOs be labeled. Standing with her are (l to r): Scott Chaskey, NOFA-NY; Stacie Orell, GMO Free New York; David Byrnes, Good Boy Organics; Laura Haight, NYPIRG; Patty Lovera, Food and Water Watch; and Michael Hansen, Ph.D., Consumers Union.*

## The Rent Is Too Darn High

I am outraged by the New York City Rent Guidelines Board's (RGB) decision to increase rents for rent-stabilized tenants by 4% for one-year lease renewals and 7.75% for two-year lease renewals. Clearly, the way in which these increases are calculated as well as the makeup of the RGB need to be changed. Find me a senior whose Social Security has increased by half as much this year, or any person for that matter whose salary has increased by that much, and then I'll call this increase fair. This decision has real-life implications for real people: my office has seen a marked increase in evictions because hard-working, middle class families simply cannot keep pace with these runaway rent increases, and I am sure the same is true citywide.

This session, I passed four pieces of legislation that would help to preserve affordable housing in this City.

Assembly bill A.991 would overturn a pro-landlord decision by the RGB that allows landlords to levy a surcharge on the rents of rent-stabilized tenants paying less than \$1,000 in monthly rent who have been living in their apartments for more than six

years, which essentially amounts to a poor tax on low-income, long-term tenants.

Bill A.748 would allow the New York State Department of Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) to look back beyond the statutory four-year look-back period when considering overcharge complaints in cases of fraud and in other circumstances.

Bill A.1585 would repeal vacancy decontrol, which serves essentially as an incentive to landlords to withhold services and necessary repairs and harass tenants in the hopes that the tenant will eventually vacate the unit. Finally, bill A.1128 would protect thousands of Mitchell-Lama tenants from outside rent increases after their building leaves the housing program.

New York City's greatness is derived, in large part, from the fact that it is so diverse; that diversity includes not only racial, ethnic and religious makeup, but also economic diversity. Preserving the precious units of remaining affordable housing in this City is the key to preserving that diversity, and to ensuring that the working-class New Yorkers who built this City can continue to live here.



*Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal addresses the crowd at her Annual Seniors Day event at the Museum of Natural History.*

Bill A.619 will reduce from two to one the number of witnesses required to execute a health care proxy, thereby simplifying the process.

Bill A.1065 will allow New Yorkers to list their health care agent's name and contact information on their driver's license. This will ensure that medical professionals can easily access important health care information in the event of an emergency.

## Health Care Decisions Day Should Be Every Day

In the spring, I hosted an event in Albany on Health Care Decisions Day to highlight the importance of executing a health care proxy. A health care proxy is a document that allows a patient to designate another person, or agent, to make health care decisions on their behalf if the individual is incapable of doing so. Having a health care proxy will ensure that one's treatment is in line with one's wishes.

I am the sponsor of several pieces of legislation that will help promote the use of health care proxies.

Bill A.989-B, which was recently signed into law, requires health-related state websites to post information about health care proxies. Hosting health care proxy forms will make this critical information more accessible, and hopefully more widely utilized.

**To obtain a free health care proxy form and instructions on completing one, please visit <http://www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-1430.pdf> or <http://compassionandsupport.org>.**



# COMMUNITY CORNER

*Continued from page 1*

groups that was attended by hundreds of parents, teachers, children and community members who made their voices heard and said “no” to redevelopment.

Although we are celebrating a rare victory for our West Side schools, the City is still pursuing its plans to redevelop the Upper East Side School. At the same time, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is going full steam ahead with its infill program, through which it would sell off NYCHA property, such as playgrounds and community centers in existing developments, to private developers for luxury housing.

With respect to disposition of land by the New York City Department of Education, Education Construction Fund, New York State School Construction Authority and the New York City Housing Authority, I have introduced legislation that would require that the agencies provide notice to the local community board, borough president and City Council member before any request for expressions of interest or request for proposals is issued. The bill would further require that a public hearing be held before any agency action could be taken.

The bill would also subject all dispositions of land by the agencies to the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, more commonly referred to as ULURP. Requiring public input at the outset of the process will ensure that the community is not taken by surprise and that any plans for the lease or sale of public lands to private developers will be shaped by the affected community.



*Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal reads to children at the Ryan/Chelsea-Clinton Community Health Center during Early Literacy Awareness Week.*

## Working to Keep Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Moving

Clinton/Hell's Kitchen residents seem to be under siege by traffic of all shapes and sizes, including charter buses looking to cut corners on their way to the Port Authority Bus Terminal that illegally clog up residential side streets. Particularly concerning is the safety of children attending P.S. 51, the Elias Howe School, on West 44th Street and 10th Avenue. Classes had been held temporarily on the East Side but are now back at the school. This intersection is a dangerous one, with speeding cars and taxis parking on sidewalks, and we must ensure that students and their parents are safe, especially during drop-off and pick-up times.

Pedestrian walkways are no less dangerous than the streets, with subway grates along 8th Avenue in desperate need of repair. Bus shelters are necessary to ensure that seniors waiting for the bus can do so safely and comfortably.

I have been working with Community Board 4 (CB 4), CHEK-PEDS and other members of the community to address each of these issues. I wrote to the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding charter buses' illegal routes, and conducted a walkthrough with CB 4, DOT and the MTA to identify the grates in need of repair and bus stops in need of shelters. Finally, I am pleased to announce that I helped to pass legislation that was signed into law by the Governor, which will enable the City to install cameras that record the license plates

of speeding cars in 20 school zones citywide. I am working to expand the speed camera program to include additional locations.

If you notice a dangerous traffic or pedestrian issue in your area, please call me at 212.873.6368, and I will follow up to make sure that it is addressed.

## Sunday Isn't for Sleeping In Anymore with 24/7 Construction Noise

With increasing frequency, I have been hearing from people throughout the district that they have been plagued by noisy and disruptive construction that takes place all day, every day, and even on holidays. The New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) has apparently decided that Saturday and Sunday are just the next work days after Friday, and that the work day can begin as early as 6 a.m. and end as late as 2 a.m. at some sites. The construction is often so loud that it disturbs sleep, and people have reported to me that they have to shout to be heard in their own homes.

New Yorkers work hard during the week, and are entitled to some peace and quiet in the evenings and on the weekend. Though construction will always be a reality in New York City, reasonable restrictions on the times during which it may occur must be in place. It appears that DOB is granting after-hours variances (AHVs) with reckless abandon, and this must stop. I have been successful in having a handful of AHVs revoked, but this is a growing problem that must be dealt with broadly. To that end, I have formed the After-Hours Construction Taskforce to address this issue. The taskforce includes local elected officials, local community boards and other community leaders. Working together, I am confident that we will be able to craft a reasonable policy regarding AHVs in this City that respects the rights of the community to quiet enjoyment of their homes and neighborhoods as well as the developers' needs to keep construction going. In the meantime, if you are experiencing noisy and disruptive night and weekend construction work, please contact my office at 212.873.6368.

## Greening the City One "Donut" at a Time

Though we are fortunate to have some of the world's greatest parks, New York City is often referred to as the concrete jungle. Thousands of these cement acres that exist between buildings and in rear yards are also known as "donuts." I have been working closely with community members on a bill, A.2194, that will provide a tax abatement to owners of buildings who green those spaces by planting vegetation of any kind. By providing owners with a financial incentive, we can replace thousands of donuts with green space. Doing so will not only help to beautify this cement jungle, but will decrease strain on critical City infrastructure by reducing the amount of runoff from storms, while increasing property values at the same time. This is a win-win-win proposition.



*David Braun, Executive Director of United for Action, with Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal at a forum held on the dangers of radon in natural gas. Rosenthal has a bill to protect New Yorkers from those dangers.*

## Taking Aim at Puppy Mills, Rosenthal Passes Bill to Shut Them Down

This year, we scored another tremendous victory for animals: I passed legislation, now awaiting the Governor's signature, which would allow local municipalities to crack down on puppy mills. As you may know, puppy mills are essentially dog-breeding factories, where dogs spend their entire lives in tiny, filthy cages for the sole purpose of making more puppies. The animals receive little if any medical care and rarely see the light of day. The vast majority of animals that are for sale in pet stores come from puppy mills. The dogs suffer from a variety of serious, oftentimes life-threatening diseases. Unsuspecting consumers step into a high-end pet store ready to spend hundreds or even thousands of dollars on a pedigreed dog, but once they get their new pet home, reality sets in. When the cost of medical care becomes too great, these poor little animals are dumped at local shelters, which are already operating on shoestring budgets.

It's clear that we must put an end to puppy mills to protect the animals who live a tortured existence in them and to prevent irresponsible breeding practice. This will also protect unwitting consumers. Once the governor signs my bill into law, municipalities will be able to regulate pet dealers. Bill A.740-A will allow local governments to require that the animals sold in pet stores are healthy, are spayed or neutered or do not come from puppy mills. Today, we are one step closer to eradicating puppy mills and saving the lives of countless animals that live in hell.

*Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal supporting striking low-wage workers as part of the Fast Food Forward campaign. Around the country, fast food workers have walked out and begun organizing for better pay and the right to unionize without fear of retaliation.*



*Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal with Rebecca Mitrison of the Humane Society of New York and students at Rosenthal's Annual Be Kind to Animals Poster and Essay Contest assembly. Also shown is Russell, a five-year-old Shih Tzu with a heart condition, who is waiting to be adopted. Call 212.752.4842 for more information.*



## 3-D Printers: The Next Frontier in Technology

Bionic ears and bone replacements made with real human stem cells sound like the stuff of the future, but that future is today. 3-D printing is a new technology through which a three-dimensional solid object of virtually any shape can be made using a digital model. 3-D printing is already being used to create prosthetic hands, for example, and, unfortunately, guns as well. Though 3-D printers are still relatively expensive, the technology is rapidly improving, and soon, you and I will be able to own a printer that can create anything, from a replacement spigot for a leaky sink to a pair of shoes, right in the comfort of our own homes.

This technology has the ability to revolutionize the medical and scientific field, as well as the ways in which we produce and purchase goods in this country. With potentially innumerable applications, it is critical that we discuss the ways in which to foster this technology's responsible growth so that its potential may be harnessed to enhance our lives.

As the Chair of the Legislative Commission on Science and Technology, I will be convening a roundtable of experts to investigate these issues. The Commission will produce a series of recommendations and I will keep you updated on developments.