



KARL A. BRABENEC  
Assemblyman 98<sup>th</sup> District

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June 15, 2015

Hon. Dov Hikind  
LOB 551  
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Assemblyman Hikind,

I am writing to you today in response to comments you made this past Wednesday, June 10, at the public hearing regarding the proposed Kiryas Joel Annexation.

At that hearing I was troubled by your assertion that those of us who are opposed to this annexation are motivated by hatred and by anti-Semitism. In your words, we're "not anti-annexation but anti-Hasidic Jew."

As you know, I have the privilege of representing the Town of Monroe, including the Village of Kiryas Joel, in the State Assembly. I am, therefore, in an excellent position to know the hearts and minds of all of the members of this community, and I can state unequivocally that the opposition to annexation has nothing to do with the religion, customs, language, or dress of those proposing it. To suggest otherwise is nothing less than an incitement to resentment and division.

Our concerns regarding the proposed annexation are based in fact: the fact that the Village of Kiryas Joel has grown by nearly 70% over the past 15 years; the fact that Orange County will have to keep pace with infrastructure demands and increased traffic for such concentrated growth; the fact there will be a massive increase in effluent into the Ramapo River; the fact that the population of Kiryas Joel is already 93% enrolled in Medicaid; and the fact that the political leadership of the Village has steadfastly refused to answer their neighbors' legitimate questions regarding these and other pressing issues.

And I assure you these questions would be raised whether Kiryas Joel was composed of Buddhists, atheists, or Anabaptists! This was the essence of my message when I spoke at the same public hearing as you did. Our community needs peace and we need to be better neighbors to each other, but there will be no peace so long as public debate is supplanted by name-calling and obstinacy.

Ironically, that is precisely what you purport to condemn, even as you perpetuate the language of accusation and acrimony. Assemblyman Hikind, if you truly hope to, in your words, "find a way... to make things work for the sake of everyone," then I will be proud to stand with you. But that way will elude us so long as Kiryas Joel's political leadership and its supporters attempt to conflate honest concern with naked prejudice.

Please consider this the next time you feel compelled to travel up from Brooklyn to condemn my constituents.

Sincerely,

Karl A. Brabene  
Member of Assembly