

Welcome to

ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 36

FROM THE OFFICE OF YOUR ASSEMBLYMEMBER

A NOTE FROM ZOHRAN

Dear neighbors,
Happy November!

As the weather in District 36 gets colder and the days become shorter, my office has been hard at work for Astoria and Long Island City. We have continued to serve constituents across the district while also making progress on systemic issues: making our public transit safe, reliable, and accessible; ensuring that private universities pay their fair share in taxes to fund public education; and expanding and improving our services for asylum seekers.

You'll find additional updates throughout this mailer, including upcoming MTA service changes, legislative updates, community events, and helpful programs.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns. In particular, if you, or someone you know, need support with accessing government benefits (unemployment, health insurance, SNAP/EBT) or are facing an issue with your landlord, our constituent services team can help. You can reach us by emailing ad36@nyassembly.gov, by phone at 718-545-3889, or by filling out our online intake form at bit.ly/ad36_intake.

Our neighborhoods mean the world to me, and it has been an honor to represent you in the state legislature for the last four years. I'm looking forward to this holiday season and continuing to work toward a brighter, more dignified future for all of us.

In solidarity,



Assemblymember Zohran K. Mamdani



CONTACT OUR OFFICE

Need help with housing, a ConEd bill, or a quality-of-life issue? We are here to help!

A constituent came into our office facing eviction and over \$13,000 in rental arrears. With the help of our Constituent Services Director Mariela, our office helped her navigate the HRA application process, secure a \$13,000 zero-interest loan from NYC, and get \$9,000 in grants. We also got her eviction case dismissed.

Contact us at **718-545-3889**, ad36@nyassembly.gov, or fill out an intake form online at bit.ly/ad36_intake.



PAST EVENTS IN AD36

Paper Shredding

On October 1, 2024, my office joined Senator Kristen Gonzalez's team to host a free paper shredding event in front of the Queens Public Library Tech Lab. Able to shred two boxes of documents each, constituents came from all over our district to securely and safely recycle their paper.

Summer Reading Challenge

Our office finished up our yearly summer reading challenge, and we were thrilled to award several students with the New York State Assembly Excellence in Reading award for reading more than 15 minutes a day for 40 or more days during July and August! One student, Aveer, let us know his favorite book was Jon Chad's "Science Comics: The Periodic Table of Elements." Congratulations, Aveer, and every other student who participated.

Park Cleanup

Our office provided funding to the Association of Community Employment (ACE) Programs to clean various locations throughout our neighborhood, including Athens Square Park on August 20. After hearing from many of you about increased trash on the Square, we partnered with ACE to create recurring shifts there.

ACE is an impactful organization that works with New Yorkers who have experienced homelessness, addiction, and/or incarceration and provides work experience, job training, and a support network to help them reach their goals and maintain economic independence.



MAJOR COMMUNITY UPDATES

MTA CAPITAL PLAN UPDATES

The MTA released its 2025-2029 Capital Plan last month: its next five-year plan of repairs, upgrades, and modernization efforts. Of the \$65.4 billion the MTA proposes in spending, one major component is a \$5.4 billion investment in modernizing signals, including on our very own N/R/W subway lines.



Like you, I've spent too much time on a platform waiting for trains that are either late or don't come. In July 2024, N train riders waited an average of 1 minute and 19 seconds of additional time for a train, with R train riders waiting an additional 1 minute and 46 seconds. Compare that to the 7, which recently received signal modernization improvements, where riders only waited on average 52 seconds—around half as long as the R train. New signals led to a 23% increase in on-time performance on the 7, it's time we see the same on the N, W, and R.

I am thrilled at the prospect of signal modernization coming to our district. However, with the future of congestion pricing still uncertain, much of the funding for these improvements is still to be determined. The governor's response has been to propose making the MTA's capital plan significantly smaller to make up for the potential lack of funding. I promise you this: I will fight in Albany to ensure that every part of this capital plan is funded, and that these improvements to the N/R/W become a reality for each one of us in Western Queens.

FREE BUS PILOT ENDS

The fare-free bus pilot that Senator Michael Gianaris and I led the fight for ended on September 1. The program offered fare-free bus service on five bus routes across our city, one in each borough. The program was a **resounding** success.

We had hoped that the pilot would increase ridership, provide economic relief to working class New Yorkers, and make for a safer ride. And that is exactly what we saw. Across the five routes, the MTA reported a 30 percent increase in ridership on weekdays and 38 percent on weekends, with the highest uptick in new riders from individuals earning less than \$28,000.

Moreover, I know that safety in our public transit system has continued to be a concern for our neighbors across Astoria, Long Island City, and beyond. Fare-free buses show us a path for making public transit safer: across the five routes we made free, assaults on bus operators dropped by 38.9 percent. This mirrors what happened in Kansas City after they introduced fare-free buses: security incidents dropped 39% from 2019 to 2020.

Finally, making buses free also showed positive effects on the environment: 11 percent of new bus riders had previously been driving a car or taking a taxi, thus reducing city-wide emissions. Although the pilot ended, **I am determined to keep fighting for safe, reliable, and accessible transit for our neighborhood and all of New York City.**

MTA UPDATES

31st St and 37th Ave Bus Stops

NYC DOT began installing concrete bus boarding islands at the intersection of 31st Street and 37th Avenue in October to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility.

7 Train Repairs

You can also expect weeknight (11/19) and weekend work (11/23-11/25 and 11/30-12/2) throughout mid- to late-November impacting 7 train service out of Queensboro Plaza into Manhattan due to signal, switch, and track work. The MTA will announce alternative service options when they become available. To get updates on service status, go to mta.info/notify.



LEGISLATION HIGHLIGHT

Repair Act

Did you know that Columbia and NYU don't pay a dollar in property taxes? Yes, two of the largest landlords in New York City are allowed to skip their more than \$320 million annual property tax bill, all while our public university system crumbles. I introduced the REPAIR Act to put an end to this: eliminating the property tax exemption for private universities in New York whose annual property taxes exceed \$100 million and directing the resulting revenues to CUNY.

While Columbia and NYU receive hundreds of millions of dollars in tax exemptions, CUNY schools, which serve 3,486 Astorians and Long Island City residents, are chronically underfunded. Our broad coalition, including 523 in-district members of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) and hundreds of students within the NYC Student Union, is fighting to change this.

This fight is all the more necessary given that the Mayor has cut nearly \$100 million in funding to CUNY during his administration. In the words of PSC First Vice President Jennifer Gaboury, "even as city revenue projections have improved, [the Mayor's] administration has doubled down on austerity, leaving more than 400 academic and student support staff positions at community colleges vacant."

It's time these universities act less like landlords and developers and more like educational institutions.

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ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 36
FROM THE OFFICE OF YOUR ASSEMBLYMEMBER

New York State Assembly
Albany, New York 12248

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ZOHRAN K. MAMDANI
24-08 32nd Street, Suite 1002A
Astoria, NY 11102
ad36@nyassembly.gov
718-545-3889

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ZOHRAN K. MAMDANI

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Free Covid-19 tests

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is providing four **free** at-home COVID-19 tests for every U.S. household. Everyone is eligible to order, and everything, including shipping, is free.

Order your tests at covidtests.gov.

Asylum work

Our office offers support services to asylum seekers to navigate available city-wide services.

Starting in 2023, we submitted a total of 900 Fair Fares applications and 700 IDNYC applications for our newest neighbors, with renewal periods starting this quarter.

If you need help navigating asylum seeker support services, our office can help.

EAP

Energy bill look higher than normal? Our office can help to see if you are eligible for ConEd's Energy Affordability Program, which automatically applies discounts between \$38-\$200 to your bills. If you get benefits from several governmental programs, such as SNAP, then you automatically qualify for EAP and should be receiving a discount already. If you are eligible but are yet to receive a discount, or aren't sure whether you're eligible, we can help! Reach out to our office to check your benefit status and get help applying for the program.

Free leaf bags!

Our office is giving away **free** leaf bags! Drop by either on Monday or Thursday from 11am to 7pm.

Neighborhood Trivia

Where does Astoria start and end? As the Greater Astoria Historical Society notes, the New York State Legislature passed a bill on April 12, 1839, entitled "An Act to Incorporate the Village of Astoria." Our village's boundaries originally stretched from 25th Avenue to the north, between 31st Street and 30th Avenue to the east, Broadway to the south, and the East River to the west.