



# Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon



Reports to the People

Summer 2022

## Dear Neighbors & Friends,

As our 2022 legislative session wrapped up, we have much that we accomplished for working families and New Yorkers. We passed historic legislation for abortion rights and gun violence prevention. We enacted a state budget that invests in New Yorkers and boosts our economy. We made significant improvements to strengthen our voting and election laws. We also boosted funding for education and the environment.

My bill to strengthen the public's protections during the closure of assisted living residences passed both houses and awaits the Governor's signature. This bill ensures that what happened at One Prospect Park will not happen again. In 2013, the owner of One Prospect Park, an assisted living facility, received a permanent license to operate. He promptly decided to sell it for twice what he had purchased it for, and sent notices of eviction to 125 seniors who resided there – many of whom were over 90 years old. This was devastating and despite the community's rallying and six stalwart residents suing to remain, eventually all of the residents were displaced.

It's also been a bustling time in the district. My law to remove overweight polluting trucks from the BQE is being implemented and I continue to pursue an environmentally sustainable long-term solution for the BQE corridor. I also am working with the community to demand that the State ensures the Atlantic Yards developer makes good on its promises of the delivery of affordable housing and the Urban Room. If not, they should be made to pay the contractual fines and penalties. I continue to monitor the clean-up of the Gowanus Canal and uplands to ensure the health and safety of the community is paramount.

I am thrilled that we were able to once again hold in-person Java with Jo Anne events outdoors at local coffee shops. We discuss community issues and public policy. It's one of my favorite events, complete with hard questions on the challenging topics before us. Let me know if there's a coffee shop you'd like me to come to.

Brooklyn Bridge Park opened its final section of parkland underneath the bridge, which pays overdue homage to Emily Warren Roebling. Roebling was ahead of her time, a persistent woman whose vital role in building the iconic Brooklyn Bridge we enshrine with the beautiful Emily Warren Roebling Plaza. She was intelligent and had an aptitude for navigating New York politics. I was honored to be the inaugural speaker in Brooklyn Public Library's Roebling series of Accomplished Women.

I'm also incredibly inspired by the generosity and resiliency of the people of this district as we continue to recover from COVID. Our non-profits provide critical work and new mutual aid groups have sprung up to help our neighbors. From toy and winter clothing drives, to back to school supply drives – our community comes out for each other. Thank you!

My staff have continued to work diligently on constituent cases, from unemployment to healthcare and transit, and are ready to help you. It is truly my privilege to serve you.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne Simon

## State Budget Highlights

The Legislature enacted a \$221B budget for 2022-23. This budget is full of provisions to help New Yorkers. We had an infusion of federal funds for social services and to boost New York's economic comeback. However, like most budgets, this one was also imperfect. The budget is made up of 10 different bills. I voted for 9 of them, and against the so-called "big ugly." Historically, that bill has many good things, but also many that legislators find distasteful, hence the nickname. I voted against the big ugly because it rolled back bail reforms in a way that also made unconstitutional changes to the due process protections of Kendra's Law, which then I helped fix later in the session.

The budget made enormous strides towards educational opportunity. We are moving towards universal child care. We made significant investments in health, higher education, and gun violence prevention. We're supporting small businesses as they regain their financial footing, and we restored the sale of "drinks-to-go" that were critical to struggling restaurants and bars.

### The Environment

We invested in clean energy and environmental conservation, are moving quickly to decarbonize our vehicles, and have increased the Environmental Bond Act of 2022 to \$4.2 billion (this will be on the November ballot for voter approval). There were key initiatives that were not in the budget which we will keep fighting for, including the all-electric building

### Resources

My office has various resources, including stickers for your garbage and recycling bins, a 2022 parking calendar, women's history brochures for youth, and housing and legal resources. Stop by to take a look and chat with my staff.

## State Budget Highlights *(continued)*

act and a bill to transition to New York to public power and generate renewable energy.

We also passed a major 30x30 bill to conserve 30 percent of the land and inland waters in the state by 2030, as recommended by scientists to help protect against climate change and prevent mass extinctions. We passed a bill to place a two-year moratorium on “proof-of-work” cryptocurrency mining using polluting fossil fuels.

I also introduced a bill to require zero-emission standards for watercraft and commuter trains, and authorize studies into the development of sustainable water, rail, and air transportation.

### Housing Relief

This budget expands our investment in affordable housing, and includes funding for capital improvements at NYCHA, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the Landlord Rental Assistance Program, and the Homeowner Protection Program to help avoid foreclosure.

### Helping Hardworking New Yorkers

This budget puts money back into New Yorkers’ pockets. After two years of economic setbacks, families and small businesses are now also facing the brunt of rising inflation. The increased costs of everyday goods like groceries are impacting household budgets. The 2022-23 state budget provides:

- \$2.2 billion for property tax rebate checks,
- \$585 million to suspend the state gas tax from June until the end of the year,
- \$475 million for additional Earned Income Tax Credits & Child Tax Credits,
- \$250 million to help New Yorkers catch up on utility bills, and
- \$162 million to accelerate middle-class tax cuts.

### Missed Opportunities

I’m disheartened that we didn’t pass critical measures like the Good Cause eviction housing bill and the Clean Slate bill. I also was disappointed that my LICH bill to ensure public input and Health Dept. oversight into hospital closings passed the Assembly but not the Senate; my bill to screen people who are incarcerated for dyslexia suffered the same fate.

## Preventing Gun Violence

In New York, we have invested in community intervention programs and enacted strict laws – and those initiatives have helped ensure New York has one of the lowest rates of gun deaths in the country. However, guns in New York City are most frequently trafficked in through the Iron Pipeline from other states with lax gun laws. We need comprehensive federal gun violence prevention laws to counter this illegal trafficking of firearms into New York.

I am pleased to report that we have strengthened my “Red Flag Law” – which is the strongest law of its kind in the nation. The law created “Extreme Risk Protection Orders” which are court-issued orders of protection to temporarily prohibit someone from purchasing or possessing guns if they pose a serious risk of harm to themselves or others. You can ask the court for help if you have reason to believe someone may hurt themselves or others. The police, district attorney, or school or certain mental health professionals can also ask the court for this help. Visit my website or call my office if you need more information.

The Supreme Court recently overturned New York’s 1913 law governing the issuance of permits to carry a concealed handgun. I believe this decision is wrong and will make New Yorkers less safe. Fortunately, the legislature responded quickly to pass criteria for the granting of a permit and also ban carrying firearms in many sensitive spaces, like subways and churches, to protect the public. I was pleased that my bill to ban firearms from sensitive spaces was incorporated into the comprehensive legislation that was passed in July.

My bill to create a mechanism where state taxpayers can contribute to the NYS Firearm Violence Research Institute is now law. The Institute’s scientific working group will focus on this public health crisis, providing data to drive policy.



*Simon debates legislation during legislative session.*

## Protecting People with Disabilities

My bill to protect the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) passed both houses. The bill establishes “Supported Decision-Making” (SDM) so that people with I/DD can make their own decisions with the support of trusted persons in their lives and retain their legal and civil rights. SDM prevents discrimination, recognizes that people require different supports, and it can be a less restrictive alternative to guardianship. New York’s SDM pilot was successful and I’m glad to codify it. My bill to make state websites more accessible for older people and people with disabilities has also passed the legislature.

## Strengthening the Education System

This has been an incredibly challenging time for our kids, teachers, and parents. We provided resources in this year’s budget for our schools and for the next generation of leaders to thrive. We are well on our way to fully funding the Campaign for Fiscal Equity’s mandate for our public schools.

We invested \$31.2 billion in total education aid, including an increase in Foundation Aid, and investments in Universal Pre-K and school mental health programs. We provided nearly \$3 billion for affordable child care, moving us toward universal child care. We increased funding for libraries and provided funds to help cover tuition for part-time college students.

On a subject near and dear to my heart, the **topic of literacy** received a refreshing amount of action this year. I am just thrilled that the Mayor of New York City attended my 7th annual Dyslexia Awareness Day, where he announced an historic initiative to screen students for dyslexia and other learning disabilities, and provide intervention services. Literacy is fundamentally a social justice issue: only 38% of our 4th graders are reading proficiently.

**We also took action to reduce school class size**, and I’m proud to have been the Assembly sponsor of the original bill. The research is clear that students in smaller classes do better in so many ways, and that small classes are crucial to outcomes for students of color and those from

economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The bill awaits the Governor’s signature.



*Simon with public school network Garden Train founder, Kathy Park Price.*

# Women of Distinction in AD52

Please join me in honoring the dynamic women in our community. Our honorees shared with us the people and events that inspired them, along with their challenges and hopes. Every story underscored two ideas: that one determined, passionate person can make a huge difference, and that we all benefit when we come together to make our communities stronger. You can read their full stories online: <https://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Jo-Anne-Simon>

We salute and thank you for your contributions!

- **Rawaa Nancy Albilal** is President and CEO of the Arab-American Family Support Center, dedicated to creating an inclusive safe haven for immigrants and refugees.
- **Valerie Bell**, Tenant Association President for Wyckoff Gardens, is an inspiring woman making a difference by working in public service and speaking up for her community.
- **Joe Ann Brown** is the President of the Warren Street Houses Tenant Association and has advocated for tenants' rights, community representation and opportunities.
- **Camille Casaretti** works to make education equitable for all, fighting for our children and advocating for parents as President of the District 15 Community Education Council.
- **Theresa Davis** is an activist at the Gowanus Houses and works to bring positive change to the community and improve her community's living conditions.
- **Betty Hinchman** volunteers with Gowanus Mutual Aid (GMA) to collectively care for our neighbors, help meet their essential needs, and build community.



Simon with Women of Distinction Joe Ann Brown, Valerie Bell, Theresa Davis.

- **Martha Kamber** is the CEO & President of YWCA Brooklyn and advocates for and empowers women and girls.
- **Kathy Park Price** brings communities together to make our city a better place to live. Her work for our streets, students, schools, and community gardens help shape our city for all.
- **Carolina Salguero** is the Founder + Executive Director, PortSide New York and works to connect the community to our amazing harbor.

## Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) Updates

My Weigh In Motion (WIM) bill to get illegally overweight trucks off the BQE triple cantilever was signed into law in December of 2021. I'm grateful to Senator Brian Kavanagh for his partnership on the Senate side.

These trucks cause significant wear and tear to the roadway. Removing them from the BQE triple cantilever will help extend its lifetime and allow us time to envision a long-term solution for the entire BQE corridor that reduces reliance on polluting freight trucks and prioritizes climate justice. This will be a first-in-the-nation demonstration program that will use state of the art technology to enforce truck weights, so it's important to get it right.

City Dept. of Transportation (DOT) is implementing the law and has made progress on the initiative, including cybersecurity, identifying installation locations, collaborating with engineering universities, and securing top contractors. There's a sophisticated set of parallel technologies to be installed and synched: proof of weight + video proof + legible capture of license plate, along with coordination with the City Dept. of Finance (DOF) to assess, issue, and collect fines. The existing sensors along the roadway must be replaced as they are data collection sensors and are not set up for data communication with DOF and enforcement capabilities.

I continue to urge the State DOT to work closely with City DOT to repair and re-imagine the entire BQE corridor and the deteriorating triple cantilever. The BQE was my first request to the Governor when she assumed office last year. We need collaboration at all levels of government - and community involvement.

I have also urged the City DOT to move more quickly with the BQE corridor-wide community engagement process announced under the last administration and to improve their communications with elected officials and the community. They have informed me that they are engaging with community stakeholders this summer, and planning public forums and community-based feedback sessions in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023.

## COVID-19 Updates

There has been a recent uptick in positive cases in NYC due to Covid variants. Getting vaccinated and boosted, staying home if you don't feel well, and wearing a quality mask indoors in public spaces are still the surest ways to fight Covid and stay safe.

My office has delivered KN95 masks, sanitizer, and Covid test kits to NYCHA houses, senior centers, schools, and civic groups throughout the district. Email [simonj@nyassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@nyassembly.gov) or call 718-246-4889 if you would like to stop by to pick up supplies.



Assemblymember Simon gathers cleaning supplies with Gowanus Mutual Aid.

## COVID-19 Resources:

- Find a Covid test site: text **"COVID TEST"** to **855-48** or visit [www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-testing.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-testing.page)
- Children as young as 6 months are now eligible for vaccination.
- Find a Covid vaccination site: [vaccinefinder.nyc.gov](http://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov)
- The federal government is mailing households free at-home COVID rapid antigen test kits. Visit [covid.gov/tests](http://covid.gov/tests) or call **1-800-232-0233**.
- At-home testing for Covid is available to all immunocompromised New Yorkers and those ages 65 and older. To schedule an in-home appointment, call **929-298-9400**.
- **Boosters:** People ages 50 and over, those who are ages 18-49 and immunocompromised, and those ages 18-49 who received both a primary and booster of the J&J vaccine are eligible for a second booster shot.
- Details on health insurance reimbursements for at home Covid tests: [cms.gov/how-to-get-your-at-home-OTC-COVID-19-test-for-free](http://cms.gov/how-to-get-your-at-home-OTC-COVID-19-test-for-free)

## Transit Updates

We have made our streets safer by expanding the operation of speed cameras in school zones to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year long, and by renewing their operation for three years.

Unfortunately, the first quarter of 2022 was the deadliest quarter for traffic fatalities since the start of New York City's Vision Zero Initiative in 2014. It's mind-boggling that we know how to prevent many traffic crashes and deaths, but we aren't fully implementing solutions. There are several bills in the crash victim rights and safety package which I cosponsor that would improve street safety but that weren't passed this session.

I have long called for safer streets, improved re-designs and slower speeds, and additional investment in public transit to keep our streets safe for pedestrians and cyclists. My advocacy for traffic calming as a community leader (along with other neighborhood leaders and Transportation Alternatives) led to the first traffic calming study and project in New York City in 1999. It was the first effort where community members were permitted on the consultant selection team, a role I served in along with Jane McGroarty from Brooklyn Heights and Jerry Armer from Cobble Hill. We fought against NY DOT and insisted on pilots that would show how street design can help keep all users of our streets safer. The coalition for street safety has gained much momentum since that time and together we will make more improvements.

I am also glad that the MTA has completed - on time! - the Clark Street 2/3 station elevator replacement project, and is now OPEN! We thank the MTA for working collaboratively with our office and the community and for finishing the project when they promised.



Assemblymember Simon fights for subway improvements.

## Sign Up for My Email Alerts

Email [simonj@nyassembly.gov](mailto:simonj@nyassembly.gov) to learn about community events, including my senior resource fair, mammogram van, flu shot drive, summer reading challenge for kids, and public forums.

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



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## Protecting Abortion Rights

In 2019, we codified abortion rights into state law so this right would be protected regardless of what happened to Roe. And then our fears came true. In light of the U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous decision to overturn Roe v. Wade and their actions to chip away at other civil rights, we also passed an equality amendment to protect New Yorkers from discrimination and enshrine the right to an abortion in our State Constitution.

The amendment to the State Constitution protects individuals against discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, creed, pregnancy, religion or sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. To become law, the Legislature must pass the measure again in the next legislative session before it goes to you, the voters, as a ballot referendum.

We also passed a series of protections for abortion care providers and protections to ensure NY is a safe haven for those who come here seeking care from other states.