



Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon



Reports to the People

Fall / Winter 2022

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you to the people of the 52nd Assembly District for allowing me the high honor of representing our communities for another two years in the NY State Assembly!

I'm excited to get back to Albany to continue the work of serving this district and fighting for a New York that is safer, fairer, more affordable and more just, a New York that puts into action our State Constitutional right to clean air, clean water and a healthful environment and will constitutionalize our right to make our own reproductive health decisions.

Looking back at this last year, I'm proud that the State Legislature passed historic reforms on voting rights, gun violence, and abortion. We enacted a state budget that boosts our economy and makes record investments in child care, education and the environment. We have much work ahead of us, but we are moving in a good direction.

It's also been a bustling time in the district as we continue to recover from Covid and reconnect with one another in person and virtually. My office has teamed up with community partners to conduct mammogram screenings and flu shot clinics. We've distributed leaf bags and Covid tests, and conducted voter registration efforts and a summer reading challenge for kids. We have also partnered with Gowanus Mutual Aid to conduct school supply drives and holiday food and gift drives. I'm continually inspired by the generosity and resiliency of the people of this city.

I am also pleased to report that in addition to hosting Java with Jo Anne community events online, we were once again able to hold them in-person at Ovenly in Cobble Hill and Dawn's 'til Dusk in DUMBO. Let me know if there's a coffee shop you'd like me to come to.

I also want to thank my incredible staff for the work they do day in and day out serving this district. You can contact my office with questions on unemployment, SNAP, HEAP, housing, health care, transit and more.

As you may be aware, the district lines are changing this January due to the decennial redistricting that takes place after the census. Due to the strong population growth in Assembly District 52, the district is losing some of Gowanus south of 9th Street and some of Park Slope south of 2nd Street. We are gaining the Brooklyn Navy Yard. To see if your district has changed, visit newyork.redistrictingandyou.org. However, due to court cases over the redistricting process, the Assembly lines could change yet again in 2024.

It is truly my privilege to serve you.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne Simon



Fighting Climate Change

You may be pleased to learn that all four of the ballot propositions were passed by the voters of New York. This included three city measures and a state measure that I helped pass in the legislature to make investments to fight climate change. This ballot proposition allows for a \$4.2 billion bond for environment-related projects and policy efforts, including funds to improve stormwater systems, invest in wastewater infrastructure, fund zero-emissions school buses, and for climate mitigation such as wetland protection and renewable energy projects.

Climate change is a crisis, and while \$4.2 billion is a hefty sum, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority estimated that \$10 billion is needed in the near-term to fulfill New York's Green New Deal that we passed in 2019. I will continue to make fighting climate change a top priority.



Reduced Class Size is Now the Law

The Governor signed our bill (A10498) to lower class size in New York City schools. This means that beginning in September 2023, public school class sizes will be capped at 20-25 students depending on grade level. The class size reductions will be phased in gradually over 5 years, and fully implemented by 2028. In the aftermath of Covid, many schools have reduced enrollment with a corresponding reduction in class size. Teachers and parents report that the children in these reduced size classes are doing much better - which is consistent with the research. The research shows that educational outcomes are better for all students in smaller classes.

As the sponsor of the original reduced class size bill, I was proud to help lead this effort. I believe this to be a critically important reform, one that will have a positive impact on students' learning, particularly those who experience difficulty with reading. This has been an incredibly challenging time for our kids, teachers and parents so we must provide the tools and resources for the next generation of leaders to thrive. I have advocated for the NYC Schools to begin a process to plan for implementing the law as quickly as possible.

Welcome to the Neighborhood

We are fortunate to welcome new neighbors bringing health, education, housing, and social services to the community.

Brooklyn Heights Library. Libraries are one of our greatest democratic institutions. I was thrilled to help cut the ribbon for the new Brooklyn Heights branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, which continues to be a critical cultural and educational anchor for the borough's residents. This is a magnificent innovative space and truly a 21st century library. I know it will become a welcome asset to the community for generations to come. Children, teens, and adults can explore free programs, build community, and learn. Please visit soon to see for yourself!

St. Francis College. I also attended the grand opening of St. Francis College's new space in Downtown Brooklyn, just minutes from their former location. The new campus features state-of-the-art nursing and science labs, a 300-seat auditorium and a multi-faith room. It is designed for the future, accessible to people with disabilities, and is even easier to get to via public transit. Enhanced technology is present in every classroom, common space, and lab to keep St. Francis on the cusp of developments in the academic world. You truly have to see it to believe it.

Affordable and Supportive Housing. We also welcomed our new neighbors to 90 Sands Street, which features both affordable and supportive housing with on-site social services! We know supportive housing works, and I'm glad that the non-profit Breaking Ground will be there to provide residents with the dignity and care they deserve.

I was also glad to celebrate the completion of the apartments at 50 Nevins Street in Downtown Brooklyn, operated by the Institute for Community Living, which also has supportive and affordable housing.

The New York Blood Center also opened a site at 30 Flatbush Avenue. They are one of the largest non-profit independent blood donation centers in the world, and I'm glad to welcome their life saving services into our community. New York City has been experiencing a blood shortage emergency, so please donate blood if you can: www.nybc.org

I also want to congratulate **Planned Parenthood of Greater New York** on the opening of a new and modernized health center in Downtown Brooklyn. Thank you to the staff who go above and beyond in providing health care for their patients, from abortion care to cancer screenings, birth control and more.



Bill Signings

I'm thrilled that the Governor just signed into law my bill A02211 to strengthen the public's protections during the closure of assisted living residences. 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.

The Governor also signed my bill (A8453A) that requires state contractors and vendors to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Web accessibility issues are not just a barrier for our state's disabled community, but many of our state's senior citizens are also greatly impacted by websites that are not user-friendly. This will assist our state with the goal of ensuring that websites are as user-friendly as possible.

BQE Engagement Process

NYC Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) recently started community engagement to fix the BQE, with the goal of improving the BQE corridor in Brooklyn and reconnecting communities divided by the creation of the highway. DOT will work with communities along the BQE corridor on two initiatives: BQE Central will fix the 1.5 mile City-owned section from Atlantic Avenue to Sands Street that includes multiple bridge structures (and the 0.4 mile-long triple cantilever) and BQE North and South (state-owned) will identify upgrades for all other segments of the BQE corridor in Brooklyn.

New federal funds, available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provide a unique opportunity to upgrade the BQE for the 21st Century. The DOT will apply for the first round of federal funding for BQE Central by March of 2023, and then make applications in subsequent years for BQE Central, South and North. I have concerns about conducting enough of the engagement in time for that first deadline, but I'm so glad the process is moving forward after the years-long delay on tackling this corridor.

The city also created a BQE Community Visioning Council and will soon be awarding grants to local community groups to help with the engagement process.

Your input is necessary. Here are ways you can participate:

- Review the updated NYC BQE website: <https://bqevision.com>
- Attend the City's public visioning sessions.
- Provide feedback online.
- Email simonj@nyassembly.gov to get my emails and stay informed.

Adult Survivors Act: Look Back Period.

One of the things we learned while passing the Child Victims Act a few years ago was the shocking number of adults who suffered from sexual violence and abuse, but had not known enough about their rights to pursue them legally in a timely manner. This included numerous instances of physicians who preyed on their patients. In response, the legislature passed the Adult Survivors Act (A648A) which provides for a one year window to file suit regardless of when the assault occurred. That one year window is now open and closes on November 24, 2023. We encourage anyone who might be protected by this law to look into their newly reinstated right to pursue a civil action for damages: www.safehorizon.org/adult-survivors-act

Rent Freeze Programs

The NYC Rent Freeze Program, which includes the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program and the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) Program, helps those eligible stay in affordable housing by freezing their rent.

To qualify for SCRIE, you must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 62 years old;
- Be the Head of Household as the primary tenant named on the lease/rent order or have been granted succession rights in a rent controlled, rent stabilized or a rent regulated hotel apartment;
- Have a combined household income of \$50,000 or less; and
- Spend more than one-third of your monthly household income on rent.

To qualify for DRIE, you must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Combined household income of \$50,000 or less and spend more than one-third of your monthly income on rent;
- Collect income from SSI, SSDI, VA disability pension or compensation, or disability-related Medicaid if you have received either SSI or SSDI in the past;
- Have your name on the lease or have succession rights in a rent stabilized apartment, a rent controlled apartment, a Mitchell-Lama, a Limited Dividend development, a redevelopment company development, a HDFC Cooperative development, a Section 213 Cooperative unit, a rent regulated hotel or single room occupancy unit.

To learn more, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/freezeyourent. To search for housing lotteries and affordable apartments near you, visit <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov>

Transit News



We have made our streets safer via state legislation (A10438) to expand 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.

We've also made some great hyper-local improvements. The street safety issues, congestion, and rampant double parking on Schermerhorn Street between Smith Street and Third Avenue was the stuff of community nightmares for years. After advocacy from the community and elected officials, City DOT revised the street plan and changed that stretch of the street to become one-way for cars eastbound with a two-way bike lane. We expect these changes, along with a better delineated bike lane on Bond - which will now be northbound - to reduce congestion and improve safety.

The MTA is relaunching the Brooklyn Bus Network Redesign project with a Draft Plan for community input. The process was started in

late 2019 and then stalled due to Covid. The Draft Plan introduces a proposed Brooklyn bus network with routes, stops, and generalized frequencies. It is so important that you weigh in on this draft plan in 2023 so that we can take advantage of this opportunity to improve the bus system: <https://new.mta.info/project/brooklyn-bus-network-redesign>.

There's quite a bit of activity on our bridges and streets, as you've likely noticed. The 4th Avenue Vision Zero Great Streets project is underway. This 3-mile, \$60M project spans 4th Avenue from 8th to 64th Streets in Brooklyn, through the neighborhoods of Park Slope, Gowanus, and Sunset Park. Through June 2024, NYC DOT and DDC will complete the construction of raised, landscaped medians to encourage safe pedestrian crossings and to calm vehicular traffic.

Right here in Park Slope, the community is working to make streets safer for kids by advocating for a permanent pedestrian plaza at 4th Street at 5th Avenue. Neighbors want to transform a cul-de-sac that currently divides a school and a park complex into a pedestrian plaza that brings the community together. Earlier this fall, I had a great time with the community and kids painting picnic tables bright colors for the plaza.

The DOT recently started a multiyear design process for Grand Army Plaza. The work is part of a larger Prospect Heights Public Realm Capital Project Scope Development Study that includes planned upgrades to Vanderbilt and Underhill avenues. Thinking big about how to improve the safety, functionality, and accessibility of this important cultural gateway is encouraged. Additional public meetings will be held in March of 2023.

LICH / NYU Updates

Madison Realty Group (MRG) recently acquired the former LICH sites at 350 Hicks Street and 91 Pacific Street from the original developer, Fortis. Fortis hadn't been communicative, was behind on the project, and their promises to upgrade and maintain the playgrounds had gone unfulfilled. MRG representatives recently attended community meetings. I'm very pleased that MRG took on the responsibility for much-needed maintenance of the two Henry Street playgrounds and the adjacent sitting park, and they will soon conduct critical repairs to Tot Playground.

Fortis continues to have responsibility for remediation at other sites, including noise mitigation at the infamous "whistling" building.

NYU's new ambulatory care facility is scheduled to open in early spring of 2023 with more services, including cardiology, gastroenterology and orthopedics. Once the new emergency department is opened, the existing one will remain open for another 30 days before closing, so there will be no lapse in access to services.

Brooklyn Detention Center Updates

The city continues its work to dismantle the Brooklyn Detention Complex on Atlantic Avenue in Downtown Brooklyn. Construction began early this year, and it is expected to be completed later in 2023. The current phase of the project includes taking down the lower level of the structure (podium), which will continue through December. After the podium is dismantled, work will begin on the tower structure. Temporary sidewalk and parking restrictions on Smith Street and State Street will continue until at least April of 2023. Noise is expected to be intermittent, and it is monitored to ensure it does not exceed our local noise codes. If you have any further questions or concerns about this project, you can contact the site's Community Construction Liaison at brooklyncccl@bbjnyc.com or visit their office at 360 Atlantic Ave.

Helpful Resources

Covid-19 Booster Shots

The Covid booster shots have been updated to target the dominant Omicron variants. These new boosters are available to anyone over the age of 5. In order to protect yourself and your community, we urge you to get boosted and get a flu shot. Call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692) or go to vaccinefinder.nyc.gov

988 is the new, free number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Instead of dialing 911, you can dial or text 988 to connect to caring support if you are in mental health distress, which may include thoughts of suicide, substance use crisis, or emotional distress. Interpretation services are available in over 150 languages.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

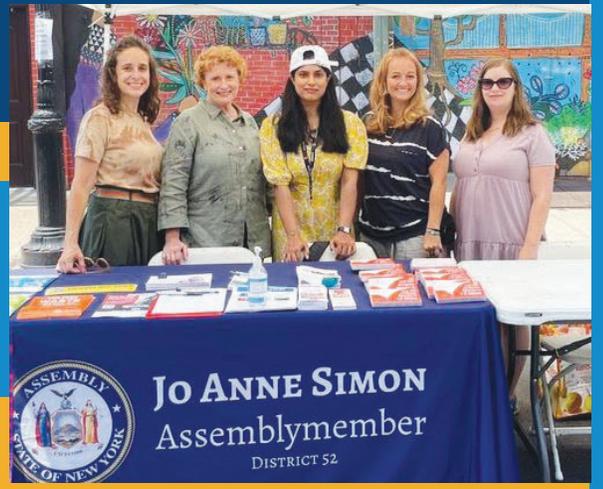
HEAP helps low-income people pay the cost of heating their homes. Eligibility is based on income, household size, primary heating source, and the presence of a household member who is under age 6, age 60 or older or disabled. You may also be eligible for the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement benefit. Apply online at mybenefits.ny.gov or call DSS/HRA HEAP at 212-331-3126.

Apply for Student Loan Relief

The application is open for the federal Student Loan Debt Relief program. This program provides full or partial discharge of loans up to \$20,000 to Federal Pell Grant recipients and up to \$10,000 to non-Pell Grant recipients. The program is for individuals who made less than \$125,000 in 2021 or 2020, or families that made less than \$250,000 in 2021 or 2020. Apply no later than Dec. 31, 2023. <https://studentaid.gov/debt-relief/application>

Reduced Subway Fares

Fair Fares for Subway Riders. 600,000 New Yorkers are eligible for the MTA Fair Fares reduced cost subway program, yet many aren't aware or taking advantage of it. Visit www.nyc.gov/FairFares or call 311 to apply.



New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



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Office Resources:

My office has various resources, including stickers for your garbage and recycling bins, a 2023 parking calendar, women's history brochures for youth, and housing and legal resources. Stop by to take a look and chat with my staff.

Sign up for my Email Alerts:

Email simonj@nyassembly.gov to learn about community events and policy alerts.