

Deborah Glick's NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

WINTER 2020 • NEW YORK'S 66TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT IN ACTION • ISSUE 68



Dear Neighbor,

To begin, I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to continue to serve the people of the 66th Assembly District. It has been a momentous, and often harrowing, year. The Coronavirus pandemic has upended life as we knew it, taking the lives of loved ones and neighbors, seriously impacting the health of others, and plunging all of us into months of uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity.

When COVID-19 first began to spread, many called it “the great equalizer,” believing that its impact would be felt evenly among all Americans. We now know that this is untrue; Black, Latinx, and Indigenous Americans are more likely to contract the virus, be hospitalized, and die than their white counterparts. And the economic impacts have certainly not been shared evenly; while many of us have been affected by lay-offs and business closures, there are thousands of New Yorkers who have also faced the loss of housing, food insecurity, and the loss of a parent or partner who helped keep their household afloat.

We are seeing the results of this upheaval on our streets. Like you, I have seen the evidence of the City’s homelessness crisis in our neighborhood. I have listened to the calls to my office about witnessing drug use, and about the seeming unwillingness of some police officers, angry about this summer’s uprisings, to intervene. And I have heard from my constituents that they are afraid and angry about the lack of City leadership in addressing the challenges that face it.

But I also know that New York is anything but over. I am hopeful that as we learn how to better fight the virus, the restaurants, shops, and businesses that define our neighborhood and the rest of the City will return. I have witnessed our communities come together time and again during this crisis to fight for one another, and we will continue to be challenged to do so in the months and years ahead. New York has always prided itself on being a progressive city, but New Yorkers have also witnessed the ways that economic divides have often revealed something quite different. This moment calls all of us to walk it like we talk it, and be a City that supports not just some of us, but all of us. We will need to deepen our empathy for one another and prepare to share in the cuts to City and State services that are to come, although I am grateful that the incoming federal administration has a stated commitment to sharing the responsibility for seeing us through this crisis and will hopefully provide needed support. All the while, I join with you in remaining deeply grateful for the privilege of living in one of the greatest cities in the world.

Sincerely,

Deborah

LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

With the 2020 election behind us and the 2021 legislative session set to begin in a few short weeks, I want to take an opportunity to share with you my expectations and legislative priorities for the upcoming year. Come January, we will have a new federal administration, which has signaled that America will return to the Paris Climate Accord, provide protection to Dreamers, rejoin the World Health Organization, and focus on combating the Coronavirus with science as we work to rebuild our economy. New York, along with every other state, desperately needs a substantial stimulus package and I am hopeful that after all elections are settled there will be a proper focus on a true recovery package.

Here is a preview of my personal legislative priorities for this year:

Raise Revenue

I will be vigorously fighting for passage of two of my bills to raise revenue to address our structural deficit. My **pied-a-terre** bill will establish a framework for a city-wide tax on luxury non-primary residences valued at over \$5 million in New York City; and my **enhanced millionaire’s tax** bill will raise state income tax rates for individuals and families who earn over \$5 million per year and dedicate this raised revenue to public education and CUNY and SUNY.

Protect the Environment

The next step in removing lead from our environment is to **ban ammunition made from lead on state lands**. Lead is an extremely toxic metal that should be used as little as possible. When used in ammunition, lead fragments upon impact, embedding toxic shrapnel throughout the meat of the hunted animal. In turn this has been shown to poison animals who eat these animals, including eagles and other scavengers, and can be dangerous to humans who eat meat harvested with lead bullets. Alternative ammunition is increasingly available, and it is time we disallow lead to be used for hunting on state lands.

Another critical issue will be to increase New York’s renewable energy capabilities by expanding wind power. Unfortunately, wind turbines are sited for optimal power generation in heavily trafficked bird flight paths especially during migratory seasons. Therefore, I will strenuously push



Delivering another round of hand sanitizer to the great team at God’s Love We Deliver, a cherished community partner that continues working to assist New Yorkers during this unprecedented time.

for my bill to **require one turbine rotor blade be painted on all existing and future wind turbines**, thus making the turbine more visible to birds in flight. This has been demonstrated to reduce bird strikes by 72%.

Animal Rights

I will be striving to ban **wildlife killing contests**. These disturbing organized events celebrate the wanton killing of wildlife like squirrels, rabbits, foxes, and coyotes under the guise of “wildlife management” for cash or prizes. Wildlife killing contests are ineffective for population control, and they treat animals as disposable and are utterly disrespectful to New York’s natural ecosystem. These inhumane contests have been banned in seven states so far, and New York should be the next state to do so. Additionally, I will be working to once and for all **ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption**. Horses are currently auctioned for slaughter and transported through New York State to slaughterhouses in Quebec. Horse meat is unsafe for human consumption due to the veterinary treatments they receive (such as “Bute”). Horses sold for slaughter are never transported humanely because there is no concern

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Balancing Executive Power Even in a Crisis

Relatively few Americans have lived through the kinds of simultaneous, tumultuous events this year has brought. We have largely been operating in uncharted territory. In the spring, the worst of the first-wave of Coronavirus infections that afflicted New York City coincided with the Legislative Session in Albany, and in particular passing our state constitutionally mandated budget by March 31. Cases were rising fast, hospitals became overwhelmed, offices shut down, employees who were non-essential transitioned to work-from-home, small businesses and cultural spaces closed, and much of life ground to a halt and has remained drastically changed. The speed of these events caused many of us, the legislature and many elected officials included, to lean on the authority of a strong central executive to marshal the forces necessary to quickly address the acute crisis of the pandemic in New York. The pandemic is not over, but we now know far more than we did. New Yorkers have banded together to protect one another, taking the measures needed to keep infection rates low, a practice we will continue as we navigate the winter and see our Covid rates likely rise again.

Giving too much power to the executive branch in a time of crisis can create a risky situation where the public is unclear as to when legitimate power may be restored to those elected to serve in the legislature. While it was helpful to have an initial strong response from the executive, both on the City and State levels, the people deserve to have their elected representatives weigh in. We have a legislature for a reason – to balance the power of the executive branch by ensuring that our constituents' needs are valued and considered. Given the myriad complex issues facing the State and City as we continue to manage the pandemic, the legislature should now take up their charge from the people to address pressing issues facing New

Yorkers – revenue raising options, funding and administration of the education system, updates and improvements to the delivery of health care, and how New York will combat climate change. Many industries have sought to benefit from some aspects of the pandemic and feel that looser regulations on the State level may benefit New Yorkers. However, the legislature has been elected to review those claims and adjudicate any permanent changes to legal statute.

Making quick and not fully thought out decisions can be perilous in our democratic systems because of the permanency that some changes require. Recently, the City Council extended outdoor dining rules that were instituted as part of emergency actions over the summer to give relief to restaurants and bars, allowing them to open, and rehire many in the hospitality industry. I think finding temporary solutions that satisfy the goals of employment and economic activity is good, and necessary. However, the permanency aspect of the outdoor dining rules is problematic. I am concerned that this was a wholesale giveaway of public space in New York City without adequate review and the public was seemingly unaware that the outcome may result in something that cannot easily be undone.

Enacting hasty proposals, even those with good intentions, can have negative consequences once a crisis has passed – something we should be mindful of as vaccines eventually become available and we've turned a corner, hopefully in the Spring. Legislatures and elected officials are charged with weighing these heavy issues and should be tasked with representing the interests of their constituents, not ceding authority to a singular individual or idea. I am hopeful that as the 2021 Session approaches, the legislature will take up issues of great importance to New York and debate the merits of proposals without ceding their authority.



I was delighted to join Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer as we participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony to open Hudson River Park's Pier 26, a great ecologically-themed addition to the community.

Staying Connected While Socially Distancing

While we are continuing to be careful about social distancing and refraining from traveling during this winter season, it's important to still find ways to stay connected to our community and to cultural events that can provide entertainment and meaning. Many of our cherished museums are open and allowing timed, socially distanced visits, as well as a range of online offerings, particularly helpful should they need to close again. For instance, the **Whitney** allows you to explore their collection online, and participate in discussions via video chat: <https://whitney.org/whitney-from-home>. The **New York Public Library** continues to offer a variety of free online programs, from book discussions to classes to trivia games. Learn more here: <https://www.nypl.org/events/calendar/online>. Area parks will continue to be refreshing outdoor destinations, and our many of our area universities offer free online events and discussions.

Another important way for older adults to stay connected is through the City Department for the Aging's wonderful program called **Friendly VOICES**, which is pairing trained volunteers with seniors during the pandemic. Volunteers connect with seniors weekly over the phone or video chat to talk about shared interests and form friendships. To learn more about the program, how to volunteer, or how to be matched with a volunteer, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/friendly-programs.page> or call my office for more information at 212-674-5153.

LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW (continued)

for their continuing safety. Captive bolt guns are not as effective at killing horses humanely as they are for other animals. I will also be working to **require courts to consider the best interest of a companion animal in divorce proceedings, prevent seniors from losing their housing solely for having a companion animal, and prohibit homeowner insurance discrimination based on dog breed.**

Reproductive Health

The sudden passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg reminds us that we must keep fighting to ensure reproductive freedom and access to abortion. This coming session, we must take action to ensure every pregnant person is receiving quality reproductive care and is afforded access to constitutionally protected services. I will be demanding that New York begins a **study of limited service pregnancy centers** so that New Yorkers fully understand the universe of centers that do not offer abortions or access to contraception. We must know if such centers rely on coercion and religious or moral pressure tactics to separate pregnant individuals from the care they need. I will also work to ensure abortions are not kept out of reach due to cost by **requiring insurance plans to cover abortions.**

I am very eager to return to Albany so I can begin getting these and other bills passed. I have many additional important bills I will be working with my colleagues to pass as well, including **requiring NYPD officers be NYC residents, requiring gender equality salary data be considered when the Comptroller awards state contracts, and requiring the MTA to annually report on contract overruns.**

Correspondence Corner

Letters play an essential role in the offices of elected officials – we write to formally state positions on important issues, ask key questions, and express both our concerns and our appreciation. I want to highlight some of the letters my office has sent in the past few months to share this important part of our work with you.

Fighting for Public Universities

The pandemic has caused a severe reduction in New York State's tax revenue, and it is likely that we will face large cuts when the legislature comes together to pass a budget this spring. In order to reduce the budget, a 20% cut across all sectors is being considered. As the Chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee, I led 39 of my colleagues in writing a letter to Robert Mujica, New York State's Budget Director, to ask that if that State must reduce financial aid programs, they be cut by no more than 10%. We also pointed to the incredible stress felt by SUNY's three teaching hospitals. Upstate, Downstate, and Stony Brook hospitals have been on the front line of treating patients with COVID-19. The cost of this heroic work was partially subsidized by the federal government, but not entirely. We cannot in good conscience ask our teaching hospitals to perform their life-saving work for New York at the detriment of their own financial well-being without providing a state subsidy. Our public colleges and universities are the State's best engine for economic advancement; austere budget cuts will not only shortchange students, but will also undercut any meaningful recovery.

Advocating for a Just NYPD

The demonstrations that began this summer against racist policing, and the reforms passed in their wake, have generated extreme responses from some members of the NYPD. On one hand, we continue to see the over-policing of largely peaceful protests, with alleged incidents of police aggression and unnecessary arrests occurring city-wide and within the district. On the other, numerous constituents have contacted my office to report that the police response to drug dealing and other criminal activity has slowed or stopped, with police being perceived as "standing down" in response to the common sense reforms passed by the State and the City Council. I have written multiple times to Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Shea to ask for more leadership, more transparency,

and more accountability. New Yorkers, facing a pandemic, deserve at a minimum a clear understanding of what is happening in the Department and to be able to trust that the police will help them when it's needed.

Arguing for City Transparency

The restaurant industry is vital to New York City, and I strongly support the efforts that have been made to assist it as we navigate the fallout from the pandemic. However, I was deeply troubled by the City Council's passage of a bill that makes many aspects of the sidewalk and street dining program that was developed in response to the pandemic permanent. Outdoor dining at this scale effectively transfers large swaths of public land into the hands of private businesses and landlords, entirely bypassing any Uniform Land Use Review Procedure or an Environmental Impact Statement. I wrote to the Mayor, Speaker Corey Johnson, and Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg to express my concern that the bill was passed without any of the attendant review by Community Boards or the public that typically accompanies, and may be legally required, for such a large transfer of public space. The economic pressures on restaurants are great; even so, they cannot be used as cover for foregoing transparency and the norms of good government.

Opposing Discriminatory Policies

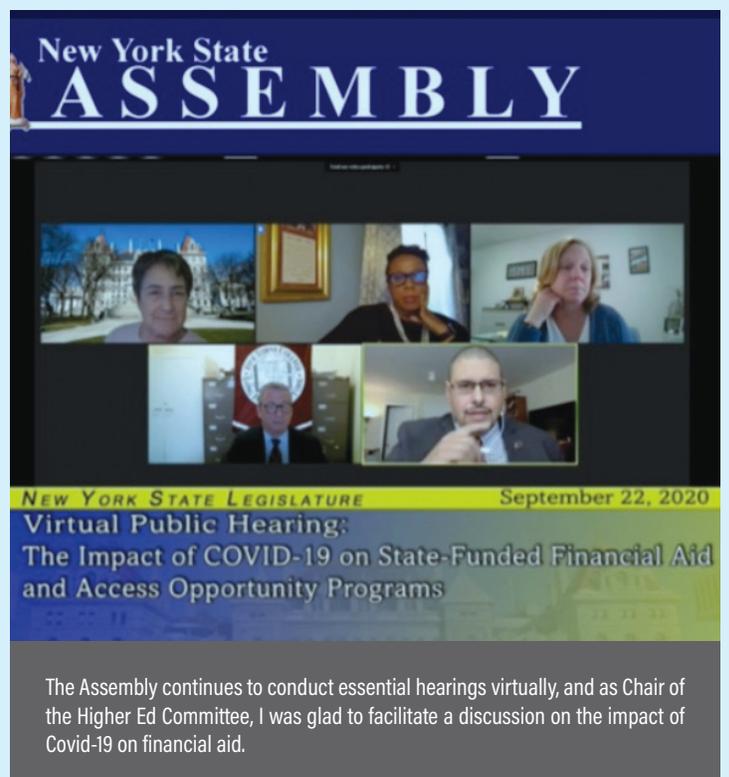
In October, I submitted comments to the Department of Homeland Security opposing a proposed rule that would radically alter our country's system for admitting international students, requiring students to study for no longer than four years, and some students for only two years (with limited exceptions). These terms, shorter than the average years taken for completion of an undergraduate or doctoral degree, would curtail international students from attending American colleges and universities at a time when our higher education system and economy is in desperate need of the \$41 billion international students contribute. The rule change also appears to be driven by racism and xenophobia; while DHS has argued it is needed to protect national security they have offered no evidence that international students pose a threat outside of being from other countries, and 36 of the 59 countries that would be restricted to two year terms are located in Africa, while the rest are largely in Asia. I asked that DHS withdraw this unnecessary and discriminatory rule immediately.

Inequities in Higher Education Financial Aid

New York State is home to one of the most vibrant higher education ecosystems in the nation. We are fortunate to have two excellent public higher education institutions - the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) – as well as over 100 premier private colleges and universities. Yet with so many superb institutions serving New Yorkers, higher education is still shamefully out of reach for many people. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an immensely negative impact on most every aspect of our lives, including pursuing a college education. But many of the inequities that exist in higher education today have been exacerbated by longstanding problems. The greatest of these problems is the insufficiency of our archaic financial aid system.

With the cost of receiving a college education soaring over the past decades, most families must rely on financial aid to bring the cost to a reasonable level. New York has several programs to make college affordable for families; the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is by far the largest and most helpful, but there are also a number of other programs such as the Education Opportunity Programs (EOP) that offer assistance and academic support, as well as the Excelsior Scholarship. The Excelsior Scholarship, although highly promoted, helps a comparatively small number of students. This program pays students' SUNY or CUNY tuition as long as their household income is under \$125,000 per year. Yet we must remember tuition is only one component of the cost to attend college; fees, room and board, meal plans, textbooks, transportation, and other living expenses can easily dwarf tuition fees. EOP and its private school counterpart HEOP are fantastic programs that make college a reality for many students who otherwise would not be able to afford to attend, but these programs are far too small to meet the demand from eligible students. The TAP program helps thousands of students pay for college each year, but the program's grant awards have not kept pace with the rising cost of attendance. SUNY's resident tuition alone has increased by more than \$2,000 since 2010, but the maximum TAP award has only increased by \$165 in the same time span.

As we turn our attention to addressing the immediate financial uncertainty of our city, state, and nation, we must be mindful of higher education's role in our economic recovery. We need to make college as accessible as possible for anyone who wishes to attend not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is good policy. I will continue to fight in Albany for a more supportive and just financial aid system that brings higher education within reach regardless of financial hardship.



Transitioning from Street Homelessness to Supportive Housing

With winter weather upon us, it's important to be aware of those who appear to be unsheltered and see how we might assist. During the past several months, my office has received numerous calls about what seems to be an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and creating encampments throughout the district. We have been in ongoing discussions with service providers in the community to learn what they are seeing and what impact the pandemic has had on people who are faced with homelessness. They have stressed that an appearance of increased homelessness is due to many factors—including a recent reduction in the roles NYPD and DSNY have historically had in clearing encampments. Additionally, shuttered businesses, travel quarantines, commuters working from home, and social distancing measures leading to blocks devoid of tourists and lower Manhattan's usual volume of pedestrians has allowed more space for unhoused people to create makeshift shelter on sidewalks.

Transitioning from street homelessness to housing presents many difficulties that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and individuals will often face obstacles during this process. For instance, homelessness typically causes emotional and psychological trauma, which can worsen during life-altering transition periods, such as, moving from street encampments into supportive housing. This transition can also trigger a loss of community because it often requires individuals to move to new neighborhoods away from friends or family, far from the environment in which they are comfortable, resulting in a detrimental impact on the person's mental health. People in this situation may be wary of service providers depending on their past experiences. This lack of trust makes it difficult for the client to accept assistance, and it often takes multiple contacts from social work teams to build the relationships necessary to be able to connect them to appropriate services. Complicated bureaucratic regulations also create barriers to housing for some people, including any previous legal trouble or criminal records, a history of substance use or mental illness, or even a lack of identifying documents that one needs in order to access housing.

In general, the transition to housing is a challenging experience, and we can find ways to be supportive neighbors by learning how best to reach out for assistance.

- It is important to remember that when making a report, it is best to do so through the City's 311 system, where it will be routed to the appropriate street outreach team.
- 911 should only be called if a homeless individual is creating a physical barrier or hazard, overstretched or sleeping in a subway, on the tracks, or in another Transit District area, or creating a danger to themselves or others.

Steps to Report a Homeless Street Condition



1. Fill out the online 311 Homeless Street Condition Form.

<https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-02253>

You can report a homeless street condition where a person repeatedly inhabits the same location or has established an encampment.



2. Your request is sent to a Homeless Outreach Service Provider.

In our community these are Breaking Ground and Goddard Downtown.



3. Social workers make multiple contacts with the client.

The top priority of the provider is to find the client housing. Social workers involve other services as needed.



4. Let my office know if you don't see resolution.

We can reach out to our community partners and service providers to learn more.

853 Broadway, Suite 2007, New York, NY 10003

Deborah Glick's



NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

ASSEMBLYMEMBER
66TH DISTRICT
NEW YORK CITY

HOW TO REACH US:
Call 212-674-5153 or
Email glickd@nyassembly.gov

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I was honored to join colleagues and community groups to speak about the urgent need to protect reproductive rights during a SCOTUS rally in October.