



STATE OF THE DISTRICT

ASSEMBLY MEMBER

DANIEL O'DONNELL

Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

FALL 2020



It cannot be said enough: Thank you to our first responders, health care workers, grocery store workers, and all those who are laboring on the front lines to save lives and battle disease under unimaginable circumstances. On behalf of a grateful community, I thank you for your heroism with all of my heart.

Like so many of our neighbors, my office has adjusted our daily operations during the coronavirus pandemic. Nonetheless, we have been actively responding to your concerns, navigating changing bureaucracy, and flagging local issues that need to be resolved. Whether the issue is housing, health care, unemployment, or legislative ideas, my office is always open and ready to support you. Call us at 212-866-3970 or email me at odonnell@nyassembly.gov.

Very truly yours,



CHANGING OUR LIVES, MAINTAINING OUR VALUES

Early this year, our lives were upended in a matter of days. For months, our communities have navigated challenging decisions on personal, communal, and societal levels, all with ever-changing rules and information around us. As we continue to wear face coverings, have virtual meetings and meet-ups, and carefully calibrate how to re-open our society while prioritizing safety, it is easy to feel like everything has changed. And yet, from my vantage point, I have seen how so much of what makes our community 'us' has remained intact. As the crisis has brought tragedies and obstacles to many of us, we have never let go of the values we hold dear or the things that define us. We are still guided by our creativity, compassion, and tolerance. We remain committed to speaking out against racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. We have organized to bring food, supplies, and support to homebound seniors and vulnerable New Yorkers. We have supported beloved local restaurants wherever possible, helping to keep these community members afloat through the crisis. Faced with obstacles we never imagined, our community has risen to the challenge and forged ahead admirably.

As your representative in the New York State Assembly, I have worked to ensure that these values guided our State's response to the crisis as well. I am deeply proud that New York State has enacted my bill to Repeal '50-a', which prevented police officers from being held accountable when they committed wrongdoing. I co-sponsored legislation to make voting during the pandemic easier; to provide rent relief to those who have lost income; to keep ICE agents out of our courtrooms; to protect immigrants from being targeted; and to make health care, paid leave, and financial support available to those impacted by the pandemic.

The virus may well be a turning point for many aspects of our lives. But who we are as a community, what we stand for, and how we face these challenging times together, holds strong.

LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

Despite the unprecedented circumstances, the New York State Legislature continued our work and passed a broad range of legislation, both responding to the many crises created by the pandemic, and passing longstanding priorities that are major accomplishments for communities across New York.

PASSED: New York State Repeals '50-A'

If you have read my newsletter before, you know that my bill to Repeal '50-a' has long been one of my highest priorities. For years, I have been speaking with colleagues and advocates to educate them and gather support. This year, that persistence paid off. Spurred by the tragic murder of George Floyd and the subsequent historic mobilization for change, I am deeply gratified to report that New York State has finally repealed 'Section 50-a' from the law.

'Section 50-a' was a statute in New York State law that shielded police from being held accountable when an officer committed wrongdoing.

For decades, 'Section 50-a' prevented police disciplinary records from being released to courts, the press, and even the families of those killed by police officers, allowing individuals with long patterns of excessive force and abuse to remain unchecked. When former Officer Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd in Minnesota, the public quickly learned that Chauvin had over 17 misconduct complaints filed against him. In New York, 'Section 50-a' would have prevented us from ever learning this pattern of misconduct. In the weeks that followed Mr. Floyd's murder, New Yorkers spoke out loud and clear that the time for reform had come, and provided the momentum needed to pass several critical pieces of longstanding police reform legislation, including the Repeal of '50-a'.

I am deeply grateful to the sponsor in the State Senate, Jamaal Bailey, for his work, and to all New Yorkers who spoke up and called for change. New York has entered a new chapter: one that can avert tragedy, and one that builds more safety, trust, transparency, and accountability for all. The Repeal of '50-a' and the police reform package passed by New York State is a monumental step forward. And the march toward justice will continue.



Assembly Member O'Donnell debates the Repeal of 50-a, with most colleagues participating virtually.

PASSED: Gender Neutral Bathrooms

My bill making all public single-stall bathrooms in the State gender neutral passed with bipartisan support. Restricting who can use single-stall restrooms threatens the privacy and safety of transgender, nonbinary and gender nonconforming people, and no one should fear harassment or discrimination for using the bathroom. I am proud of this victory for LGBTQ New Yorkers.

PASSED: Disabled Tenants' Rights

My bill, with Sen. Brian Benjamin, will protect public housing tenants with disabilities by requiring landlords to notify tenants of their rights and protections.

PASSED: Historic Business Registry

The New York State Legislature passed my bill creating a Historic Business Registry, which will be open to businesses that have operated locally for longer than 50 years and contributed to their community's history, identity, and cultural heritage.

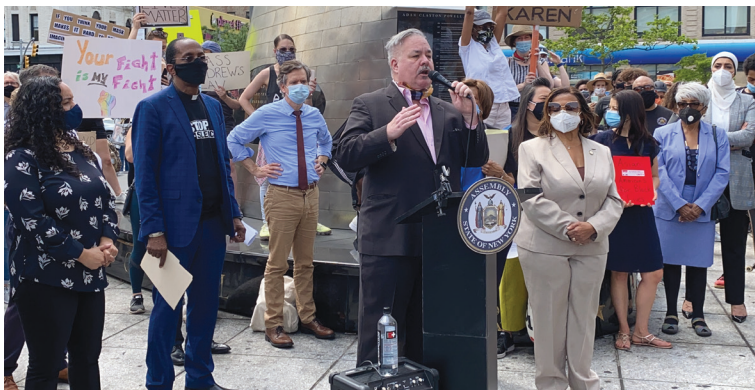
NEW: Renaming Robert Moses Park

It is well documented that Robert Moses abused his power to entrench racial and economic segregation, and ensure that the great public amenities he helped build stayed inaccessible to people of color. I introduced a bill to rename the State Park that bears his name.

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD



Before Coronavirus: Standing with neighbors at the March Against Anti-Semitism



After Coronavirus: Socially distancing and wearing masks at a rally for police reform



Before Coronavirus: Attending in person events, like my annual Free Flu Shot event with Ryan Health



After Coronavirus: Attending virtual events, including sharing updates with local Community Boards

ONGOING COVID-19 RESOURCES

Throughout the pandemic, my office has remained fully operational and open for business remotely, helping our neighbors navigate new challenges and government programs. Although much continues to change, here are some of the most commonly needed resources:

Unemployment

My office has helped nearly 500 constituents apply for unemployment and resolve issues with the Department of Labor. If you have lost income due to COVID-19, visit: labor.ny.gov/unemploymentassistance.shtm. If you are having any trouble with your Unemployment Insurance benefits, please contact my office.

Rent and Evictions

The New York State Legislature passed the Tenant Safe Harbor Act, prohibiting evictions against residential tenants who experienced financial hardship during coronavirus and could not pay their rent during the pandemic (between March 7, 2020 and when the Executive Orders related to coronavirus are lifted). The State created an emergency rent relief program for residential tenants in mid-July. For the latest information on evictions and rent relief, please contact my office.

Food Access

New York City has consolidated food distribution programs for seniors, children, and those in need. Free “grab and go” meals, including kosher, halal, and vegetarian options, are available every weekday at sites around the City. See the closest option here: www.opt-osfns.org/schoolfoodny/meals/default.aspx

Mental Health

As many struggle with loss, stress, and anxiety, please remember it is always okay to ask for help. Visit NYC Well for mental health resources, including hotlines for those in a crisis, connections to ongoing therapy, and links to meditation and mindfulness programs. Visit: nycwell.cityofnewyork.us

Please continue to consult City and State health authorities for medical information about COVID-19. Please contact my office for up to date information on these programs, or for assistance accessing support. Contact odonnell@nyassembly.gov or 212-866-3970.

HAVE YOU COMPLETED THE 2020 CENSUS?

In less than 10 minutes, you can help your community get counted. You can respond online, by phone or through the mail. All personal information provided is confidential.

Go to **my2020census.gov** to complete the 2020 Census.

Why is the 2020 Census important?

- It's a count of everyone in America, from grandparents to newborn babies.
- It determines how much federal funding our state receives for essential services like hospitals and schools.
- It helps cities and communities make long-term plans for transportation and infrastructure.



For more information, visit: **<https://www.newyorkcounts2020.org>**

245 West 104th Street, New York, NY 10025



ASSEMBLY MEMBER
**DANIEL
O'DONNELL'S**
STATE OF
THE DISTRICT

Daniel O'Donnell, Assembly Member, 69th District
Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

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Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell

245 W. 104th Street, New York, NY 10025 • 212-866-3970 • Fax: 212-864-1095
712 Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12248 • 518-455-5603 • Fax: 518-455-3812
Email: odonneld@nyassembly.gov

Open Monday through Friday 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.