



# STATE OF THE DISTRICT

ASSEMBLY MEMBER

**DANIEL O'DONNELL**

Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

Spring 2021



Dear Neighbors,

*I hope this newsletter finds you well. As we collectively recover from the pandemic, and figure out what the new normal looks like, my office is here to help.*

*We're open (virtually) from Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For those with specific housing problems or who need assistance in Spanish, I have a dedicated specialist on staff. I also have a constituent liaison with experience navigating unemployment, vaccine information, and other community-wide concerns.*

*Interested in learning about the work I'm doing in my district, as well as new events and opportunities? You can join my e-list by emailing "subscribe" to [odonnelld@nyassembly.gov](mailto:odonnelld@nyassembly.gov).*

Very truly yours,



## ENSURING AN EQUITABLE RECOVERY

More than a year has passed since COVID-19 upended our lives. After enduring a deeply challenging time, our community can start to breathe a sigh of relief as subways, restaurants, and cultural institutions begin to re-open. Now, my colleagues and I are focused on ensuring that our City and State come back safer, fairer, and more livable than before. I'm proud of our progress, both within our local community and at the State Legislature.

Locally, my office has led vaccine information sessions, organized vaccine pop-up clinics, and supported tenants and small businesses with rent relief. Legislatively, we committed to a fair recovery for all in our historic budget, which protects against housing instability, unemployment, and educational inequities. We allocated the highest level of state aid ever given to school districts for the 2021-2022 school year. We created an "Excluded Workers" fund to help our neighbors without access to other forms of support; a COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program; and a historic Arts Recovery and Revitalization Program. We also finally passed a millionaire's tax so the best off among us can help those struggling most.

In addition, the Legislature enacted landmark legislation that protects New Yorkers who faced marginalization even before COVID-19. Our vote to end the use of long-term solitary confinement in jails, for example, will address human rights violations and improve safety for those in our criminal justice system. I am pleased we also took a tremendous leap toward equity by legalizing recreational marijuana. This law will expunge the felony drug records of tens of thousands of New Yorkers — many from communities of color disproportionately targeted by our War on Drugs — while investing 40% of future marijuana tax revenues in neighborhoods most harmed by drug arrests. This is just one of many measures that will solidify New York's standing as a progressive leader.

# RECENT LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

## Restoring the Right To Vote

I am thrilled to share that my bill restoring voting rights to New Yorkers on parole has become law. I wrote this bill over ten years ago, and I'm grateful to see our state buck national trends with this historic expansion of voting rights. Now, individuals on parole will be allowed to vote upon their re-entry to civil society and will be given notice and a voter registration form. I am deeply proud of this bill, which dismantles the vestiges of Jim Crow-era felony disenfranchisement in New York and affirms that every citizen has equal worth and deserves the right to vote.

## Protecting Our Environment

My bill banning the use of hydrofracking by-products for de-icing became law — a huge environmental victory. Harmful fracking wastewater had been used on our state highways to de-ice in the winter and suppress dust in the warmer months — but this also exposed our water supply and vulnerable communities to dangerous contaminants that are all too often present in fracking wastewater. My bill keeps our communities, and our state, safer.

# THE WORK AHEAD

## Ending Grand Jury Secrecy

Seven years have passed since Eric Garner was murdered, and we still don't know why a grand jury declined to indict Officer Daniel Pantaleo. For the public to have confidence that justice has been served, they need to know exactly how the indictment process is being carried out. My bill to end grand jury secrecy would allow the release of records showing the charges presented to grand juries, and what the jury was instructed.

## Banning Dangerous No-Knock Raids

No-knock raids like the one that killed Breonna Taylor last year are dangerous, costly, and all too often result in an unintended loss of life. That's why I am proud to sponsor pioneering legislation that would make our state a national leader in search warrant reform. This proposed bill will restrict the issuance and execution of all no-knock warrants and raids while also introducing new measures of oversight.

# TEN YEARS OF LGBTQ PROGRESS

Ten years ago, New York State passed the Marriage Equality Act, which allowed same sex couples like my now-husband John and me to get married. Like all important fights, the political battle to achieve equality was long and arduous. As the first openly gay man elected to the New York State Assembly in 2002, it took me years of organizing advocates, speaking publicly, and speaking to my colleagues one-on-one to convince them to see me and the LGBTQ community as equal. Finally, in 2011, the bill I wrote passed the Assembly, the Senate, and was signed into law.

In New York, marriage equality opened the door for a steady stream of LGBTQ progress. In 2012, my anti-bullying Dignity for All Students Act became the first law in New York State history that explicitly included transgender people. We have passed GENDA, banned conversion therapy, banned the gay/trans panic defense, made all single stall restrooms gender neutral, expanded services for those living with HIV, and more. Yet as I write this, transgender people are still in need of support locally and nationally. I will continue working every day for the rights, safety, and equality of all transgender, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer people.



# REVITALIZING OUR COMMUNITY



## Pop-Up Vaccine Clinics

My office worked to establish local vaccine access. When our neighborhood had no large vaccine sites nearby, I worked with the Community Boards 7 & 9, Columbia University, Morningside Retirement and Health Services, Grant Houses, Douglass Houses, and other community leaders to hold pop-up vaccine clinics that reached thousands of local residents.



## Shred Event

We didn't let the coronavirus stop us from holding our popular community shred event with Senator Robert Jackson! It was a great way to see friends and neighbors, hear from local residents, and to mark the start of Spring. If you'd like to be notified of our next Shred Event, please email me at [odonnell@nyassembly.gov](mailto:odonnell@nyassembly.gov) and ask to be on our Shred List!



## Open Streets

The "Open Streets" initiative has been a lifeline to local businesses, residents, and vendors during COVID-19, and I was glad to support them. As our community emerges from the pandemic, I have had a blast attending local street fairs, like the one on West 111th Street in the photo above, and returning to many of my favorite restaurants, shops, and cafes for the first time in person in a year.



## Clay Date

Riverside Park is an important recreational resource for our community, and I was thrilled to help the Riverside Clay Tennis Courts kick-off this season. I've been proud to help contribute to the beautification of our district by participating in Broadway Mall clean-up events, resolving sanitation concerns, and allocating funding for Riverside Park repairs and improvements.

# HAVE YOU RECEIVED YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE?

## Vaccine Information:

Vaccines are safe, effective, free, and easy. Help keep our community safe and strong and get yours here:

- Call 877-VAX-4NYC
- Use <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov>
- Speak to your regular doctor

More information about vaccine eligibility, safety, access and more at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/vaccines/covid-19-vaccines.page>

## Find Up to Date Information on Reopening

See guidelines for businesses, schools, events and more: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-businesses-and-facilities.page>

Learn about the latest NY travel guidelines here: [www.coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory](http://www.coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory)

More information on health, safety, data, and more at: [www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page)

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STATE OF  
THE DISTRICT

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Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

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