



Dear friends,

The holidays are finally here! I hope that you, your family, and friends have a happy and healthy holiday. For those alone this holiday season I hope you are able to prioritize what brings you fulfillment. My office will be closed December 23rd-January 2nd for the holiday break. If you have an issue that you need help with, you can still call or email us at (212) 807-7900 or simonet@nyassembly.gov, and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

If you experience an emergency, please call 911. If you are having an issue with your heat, call 311 and report it. Remember, landlords are required to turn the heat on if it is below 58 degrees outside, so if your heat is off, you have the right to report it!

Thank you to everyone who supported my first annual holiday toy drive! We had a wonderful open house with so many familiar and new faces stopping by my office. These toys will soon join our first load of toys that are already under trees across the west side!

I wish you a joyful holiday season, and a very Merry Christmas to all those who celebrate. I will see you in the New Year!

Tony



A photo of some of the toys donated by our West Side Holiday Hero's to brighten the holidays for families across our community.

Public Safety

In the new year I will be pushing for new approaches to addressing the mental health crisis on our streets. I have been working with experts to reform our involuntary commitment laws to protect our community and those suffering from severe mental illness. I will be pushing for more medical professionals on our streets to go beyond basic outreach. My approach will define success by measurable results that truly improve the health and safety of all in our community. Empowering medical professionals to take actions that will help keep our community safe and place those suffering from mental illness into treatment is at the foundation of my plan. Stay tuned for more details and a full announcement of my plan in the new year.



Photo from Times Square walkthrough with District Attorney Alvin Bragg, State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Councilmember Erik Bottcher and Tom Harris, co-chair of The Midtown Community Improvement Coalition, which brings government and community resources together to tackle the crisis of homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse.

My efforts to support proven solutions have taken me across the district. This week I met with the Urban Pathways team at the Ivan Shapiro House. We discussed the incredible wrap-around services provided here on the west side, barriers to providing these services, and solutions to support their work and get people back onto their feet and into our community.



A photo of my visit to a unit in the Ivan Shapiro House currently undergoing capital improvements

Last month, a tragedy unfolded in Manhattan as several were killed and severely injured in a stabbing spree. I was appalled at the stabbing spree that occurred in my district and spread to the east side of Manhattan. My heart goes out to the individuals and families impacted by this tragedy.

I am grateful for the swift actions of the NYPD that prevented further carnage from being wrought by the attacker.

As we continued to gather information we have begun to identify solutions that would have prevented this from happening. Individuals who pose a risk of violence to the general public or to themselves should not be allowed on our streets. We are in the process of finding out what failures allowed this attack to happen.

As I continue to prepare for the legislative session to return in the new year, I will continue to identify ways to ensure that every level of government is focused on addressing the intersecting issues of public safety and mental illness. We have much work to do. Our path forward must and will respect the dignity of the neighborhoods and communities directly impacted by this crisis.

A joint **letter** ([LINK TO PDF](#)) from colleagues across Manhattan is attached to this correspondence.

Ballot Dropbox Bill Signed Into Law!

Earlier this month, Governor Hochul signed [legislation I passed with Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal that authorizes dropboxes for absentee and early mail in ballots](#). Strengthening our democratic process and ensuring all have the ability to easily vote in a manner that is secure and increases confidence their vote will be counted is essential.

Many absentee ballots are invalidated for issues related to the mail-in process, including lack of an appropriate postmark or late arrival due to postal backlogs and delays. By authorizing secure absentee ballot drop boxes, this bill would emulate the systems of other states that have successfully conducted vote-by-mail elections for years by providing voters a convenient alternative option to submit their ballots without having to rely on an often overburdened postal service that has struggled to keep up with an unprecedented volume of ballot submissions.

New Legislation!

This year I will introduce brand new bills to take on a wide variety of issues. These first three new bills help keep our pets safe on our streets, protect women's health, and take on corporations who deceive consumers about their environmental practices.

The Paws ACT

The [Protecting Animals Walking on our Streets \(PAWS\) Act](#) was inspired by a [tragedy over the summer when a dog was killed by a speeding driver](#). We learned that currently, killing a pet with a motor vehicle

results in a fine equivalent to an illegal U-turn. This is not enough to be an effective deterrent for drivers to remain safe in areas with household pets and my bill would substantially increase the penalty for hitting a pet and for leaving the scene after hitting a pet to be the same level it is for hitting a person. This bill also creates a historic new legal category of “companion animal” which will be able to be used in future legislation to protect our furry friends.



A photo from my PAWs press conference attended by my co-sponsor, Senator Andrew Gounardes

IUD Insertion Anesthesia

Another bill I have introduced will [require health insurance to cover the cost of anesthesia for certain contraceptive and menstrual health procedures including IUD insertion](#). IUD insertions are often extremely painful, so much that almost half of women experience dizziness, nausea or pass out during the procedure. Further, health providers often underestimate the pain level of these procedures. Anesthesia will be much more accessible if it is covered by health insurance, a critical step to make these procedures as smooth and painless as possible.

Corporate Greenwashing

New York is feeling the impacts of climate change. Record-breaking heat waves, sea level rise, and extreme storms are racking up damage and costs. That's why many New Yorkers are rightfully considering sustainability and climate impacts when deciding which companies to support.

While some companies are meeting consumers' demand with truthful advertising for sustainable services and products, many others are vying for our money with false promises of being "environmentally friendly" when they really aren't, a practice known as greenwashing. Hardworking consumers don't have the time, let alone the scientific expertise, to separate genuine promises from deceptive claims, and they shouldn't have to.

New Yorkers deserve the truth. [That's why my bill, with Senator Rachel May](#), will explicitly ban companies from using unsubstantiated, deceptive marketing claims to advertise their products as more climate or environmentally conscious than they truly are. The bill ensures that state and municipal officials, as well as private individuals, have a mechanism to enforce the prohibition on deceptive environmental marketing against bad actors who make untruthful or misleading statements about their services and products to New York consumers.

Expanding Access to Public Meetings

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way New Yorkers interact with their government. Virtual public meetings allowed people who found it challenging to attend in person meetings to interact with their government and community, particularly people with disabilities and parents with young children.

[A bill I carry with Senator Rachel May](#) will require all state and local public bodies that are subject to the open meetings law to provide a virtual option for all public meetings, ensuring the future accessibility and transparency of public meetings. Additionally, this legislation ensures that public comments can always be taken virtually and that a level of in-person accessibility of public bodies is maintained. The State Assembly held a hearing this week where advocates who fight for transparency in government testified in favor of my bill. [View that story from Spectrum News 1 here.](#)

New Open Streets

I rallied with advocates to get an early Christmas present for residents: making the temporary open street on Broadway permanent.

We will continue to partner with local community stakeholders to make this a space for all. My letter to the DOT [can be read here.](#)



It was great to rally with advocates in support of the Broadway open street pilot (35th to 36th St)! We're pushing for a Christmas gift for midtown, to make this program permanent and continue transforming NYC's streets!

To watch my remarks click [here!](#)

Open streets have [lower storefront vacancy rates](#). Businesses along open streets see far [faster sales growth than nearby businesses on non-open streets](#). The 2022 holiday season open street program that saw 11 blocks of Fifth Avenue pedestrianized induced over [\\$3,000,000 in additional business activity for the city](#). Building open green space may even [reduce the risk of children developing certain mental and psychiatric disorders by 55%](#). The evidence is clear, open streets are good for New York City.



In The News

Assemblymember Simone talks about 'City of Yes' proposal

I had the opportunity to sit down with Errol Louis on Inside City Hall. We talked about public safety, housing, transit, and more! To watch the segment click [here!](#)



[Advocates push 5-year free universal childcare plan](#)

The folks leaving our state are not the millionaires and billionaires. They are working class New Yorkers who can no longer afford to live and raise their family here. After housing, the biggest expense for our families is childcare.

We must lower the cost of living for our families! The best way we save families across the state \$14B /year is to enact universal childcare from ages 0 to 5! Taking the crushing weight of childcare off of their backs makes it easier to stay in NY.

To watch my remarks click [here!](#)



[New bill would increase fines for drivers who hit pets, service animals in New York](#)

We gathered at the Chelsea Waterside Dog Park to announce the PAWS Act: Protecting Animals Walking on the Street! Under current law, pets are not included in penalties when a driver hits them. The PAWS Act changes that and demands our four-legged friends are treated with dignity.

You know what current law does protect? Goats, sheep, and cattle. That's how antiquated the law is when it comes to animals. Let's update it and increase the fines for hit and runs. Let's pass the PAWS Act!



New bill would increase fines for drivers who hit pets, service animals in New York *By Barbara Russo-Lennon*

Upcoming Events & Updates:

The NY State of Health Open Enrollment Period for coverage in a 2025 Qualified Health Plan is currently underway and continues until January 31, 2025. New Yorkers can enroll by the 15th of the month to have coverage starting on the 1st of the following month.

You can visit nyc.gov/health/healthcoverage or call 347-665-0214 for more information or to connect with an enrollment counselor.

NEED HEALTH INSURANCE?

OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR 2025 IS HAPPENING NOW!



**Act fast!
Enroll or renew by the
15th of the month to get
covered by the 1st of the
following month.**



**Get affordable
health insurance
with new savings
that reduce out-
of-pocket costs.**



**Speak to
a Health
Department
enrollment
counselor
for safe, free
assistance.**



Call **347-665-0214** or visit
nyc.gov/health/healthcoverage.

NYC
Health

Eric L. Adams
Mayor

As part of the W 29 to W 46th Street Design Project, the Hudson River Park Trust is partnering with Community Board 4 for an engagement meeting as they begin design. The meeting will be on Monday, January 13 at 6:30PM at the Intrepid. You can hear from the designers and share your vision as we create a greener and more welcoming waterfront. This meeting will focus on the upland area from W 39 St. to W 44 St.

Please RSVP to tschenck@hrpt.ny.gov if you're able to join.



Hudson River Park Trust & Manhattan Community Board 4 invite you to a

29TH-46TH STREET ESPLANADE & LANDSCAPE ENGAGEMENT MEETING

**FOCUS: UPLAND
AREAS NEAR PIER 81,
PIER 83 & PIER 84**

**JANUARY 13
6:30-8:30 PM**

**INTREPID MUSEUM AT PIER 86
(Closest crossing at W 46 St.)**

Hudson River Park Trust has hired Marvel Architects to design one of the final unfinished sections of Hudson River Park. Come hear from the designers and share your vision as we create a greener and more welcoming waterfront.

At this meeting, we will focus on the upland area from W 39 St. to W 44 St. Community is at the center of what we do, and we want your input as the team begins design!

RSVP to tschenck@hrpt.ny.gov

HUDSON RIVER PK

NYC Manhattan 4
Community Board

Admission to the Whitney Museum is now free every day for visitors 25 and under. Visitors can enjoy free access to exhibitions, special programming, views of the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, and more from the Museum's iconic terraces.

You can learn more by visiting their Web site.

WHITNEY

A graphic element consisting of a black outline of a jagged shape, resembling a stylized 'W' or a series of connected lines, positioned above the main circular graphic.

FREE
25 AND
UNDER

A large blue circle containing the text 'FREE 25 AND UNDER'. The bottom portion of the circle features four horizontal yellow stripes.

Congestion Pricing - Manhattan Individual Disability Exemption Plan

The Manhattan IDEP Assessment Center is accepting appointments for people who are applying for the Individual Disability Exemption Plan. Applicants can now schedule an appointment at the Center to determine if they are eligible for the exemption.

To schedule an IDEP assessment, applicants can call the appropriate number for the preferred location:

Manhattan: 888-811-1050

Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx: 844-233-3377

Enrolling into IDEP is a two-step process. Applicants first need to establish eligibility, and then use that eligibility to enroll in IDEP. To apply and learn more, you can visit mta.info/idep.

Additionally, the MTA is offering a new public webinar with a focus on how to apply for IDEP. The webinar will take place on Monday, December 23rd from 6 PM to 7 PM. Members of the public are encouraged to visit mta.info/crzwebinars to learn more and register.

Happy holidays and I look forward to serving you in 2025!

Tony