



Assembly Member

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2018 SPECIAL REPORT

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As we head into the 2019 legislative session with a supermajority in Albany heading into the 2019 legislative session, we reflect on our accomplishments and victories of 2018. We are carefully making our “to do” list to push for legislation that has been stalled in sessions past and a “wish list” of actions to help move New York forward by leaps and bounds. We are now more energized than ever to tackle the most pressing issues for the city and state of New York.

This will be the year of major reforms. In the Assembly, I am hopeful that my Election Reform and Gun Reform packages will pass the Assembly again and move on to pass in the Senate and be signed into law.

I will continue to cosponsor and support:

- *The Reproductive Health Act to codify Roe v. Wade into state law that we passed in the Assembly every year for the past five years*
- *The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) to end discrimination based on gender identity or expression*
- *The DREAM Act which has not seen the floor of the Senate since its introduction in 2014*
- *Reformation of the state’s rent laws that have not been given consideration since its last renewal in 2015, to give tenants more protections as the rent laws are set to expire in June 2019*
- *The New York Health Act to institute single-payer health care that may become a reality after four years of passing in the lower chamber*
- *The Child Victims Act to bring justice to victims of child abuse*

We have ambitious goals for legislation including enhancing protections for women and LGBTQI individuals; increasing funding for education and higher education; fighting climate change; protecting affordable housing; reforming our criminal justice system including the courts, elections and campaign finance system; and keeping guns out of the wrong hands.

More controversial and contested legislation will be the proposed elimination of the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) which was voted out of the Education Committee last session and may make it to the floor of the Assembly for a vote session. I will continue to vote “NO” on the ill-conceived bill proposed by the Mayor’s office last session to eliminate the Specialized High School Admissions Test. Importantly, I am cosponsoring legislation to end the student debt crisis in New York State by cancelling the \$10 billion dollar debt currently experienced by 400,000 New Yorkers.

This may seem like a daunting agenda but I believe that we have a unique opportunity to advance the interests of the communities we serve as never before. As always, if our office may be of service, we are just a call, email or visit away.

Sincerely,

Rebecca A. Seawright

Air Quality

As part of my continued opposition to the East 91st Street waste transfer station, I sponsored and passed legislation to require a study on the high incidence of asthma in the borough of Manhattan and to prepare a remedial plan, and legislation requiring the Department of Environmental Conservation to place air quality monitoring equipment near waste transfer stations across the State. Strong data will enable us to keep up the fight. Additionally, I conducted a meeting with the State Department of Health officials in our community office to address the asthma rates in and around the Upper East Side, particularly near the waste transfer station.

Renewal of the Rent Laws: Strengthening Tenant Protections



Donna knows that “the landlord is not the law.” She is just one of the many tenants we have served in the community office and at our Tuesday Pro-Bono Housing Legal Clinic.

New York State’s rent laws are expiring in June 2019. I strongly support the renewal and strengthening of the rent laws. We are working to end vacancy decontrol, the landlords’ practice of hiking up rents when units become vacant resulting in deregulation. Ending vacancy decontrol will go a long way toward maintaining units of affordable housing in our community.



We continue to monitor development in our neighborhood and I recently held a meeting with East 79th Street Neighborhood Association’s Betty Wallerstein and Extell officials regarding the 79-80/ First Avenue construction. As a result of our office’s efforts, a helpline has been established. Call 646-790-4040 or email information@79and1st.com with any questions during the period of demolition and construction.

Renewal of the Rent Laws continued on page 2

In the 76th District- Upper East Side, Yorkville and Roosevelt Island, we have a displacement crisis that has reached its breaking point with 115 families being evicted by court marshals last year, together with a 30 percent loss of rent stabilized housing stock since 2007 alone.

In Albany, I commit to:

1. Renewing and strengthening the rent laws, eliminating provisions for vacancy bonuses, high-rent vacancy deregulation, and Individual Apartment Improvement Increases that favor high turnover and landlord profits.
2. Eliminating preferential rents and Major Capital Improvement Increases (MCI), that leave tenants vulnerable to sharp increases leading to displacement.
3. Broadening protections to all renters by supporting the just-cause eviction law that gives tenants the right to continue tenancy unless there is good cause to terminate.
4. Reconsidering the increase calculation for rent controlled tenants

New York State Online Privacy Act

Online privacy is central to so many discussions regarding safety, security and the protection of one's identity. To that end, I am sponsoring the New York State Online Privacy Act which will establish the Office of State Online Privacy Protection and Internet Safety. The bill aims to create a comprehensive framework to protect the online privacy and to promote internet safety of individuals and businesses, private and personal information, and to provide law enforcement with the tools to combat any breaches of online security.

Spotlight on Sweepstake Scams

Standing with Helene Goldfarb, a constituent and a victim of telephone scams happening in the "212" area code.

Senior Citizens across the 76th district have been calling our district community office, often in distress, after being scammed by mysterious callers. As Chair of the New York State Subcommittee on Consumer Fraud Protection, our office responded by holding a press conference in the district community office to issue a warning to seniors as the holidays approach and the scams are more frequent. A 90-year old constituent lost her life savings when she was tricked into mailing \$20k in cash through FedEx after a phone call informed her that she was the winner of a Publisher's Clearing House competition. Never provide personal information over the telephone and as I warned during the press conference, "nothing free is for a fee," so do not pay to receive awards or prizes.



According to AARP, nearly half of all mobile calls will be scammers by 2019, which is up 60% from last year. Phone scams cost Americans approximately \$9.5 billion a year. I have sponsored legislation to ban "spoofing," the practice of falsely impersonating a representative of a government agency or other official entity. This session, our office will explore legislation to provide consumers with no-fee robocall blocking service which is currently available to all landline and cellphone customers for a fee.

Gun Reform Package

As a member of the New York State Legislators for Gun Violence Prevention, I am taking measures to eliminate gun violence in our state by sponsoring the following legislation:

■ Limiting Access to Guns

- **Revoking firearm rights of convicted domestic violence offenders has been signed into law.** Offenders are now subject to the suspension and revocation of their license to carry, possess, repair, or dispose of the firearm.
- A bill which requires a period of ten days to pass or a "proceed" response from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NCIS) prior to the delivery of a firearm to a consumer.

■ Increasing the Safety of our Community

- **Banning Bump Stocks** - Prohibits the possession, manufacture, transportation, shipment, and sale of firing accelerators.
- **Nicholas' Law** - Regulates what is considered safe storage for firearms.
- **Buy Back Program** - Allows state police to establish the Adopt-a-gun Foundation which will run a buyback program where a person may anonymously surrender firearms in exchange for a money award.
- **Preventing Ghost Guns** - Requires a serial number from the State Police for firearms created by 3-D printing technology.

■ Providing Mental Health Resources

- **Urban Youth Gun Violence Reduction Pilot Program** - addresses the mental health aspect of gun violence by providing additional resources to participating schools to support the mental health and establish a curriculum on mental health issues.
- **Extreme Risk Protection Orders** - establishes extreme risk protection orders by the courts to prohibit the purchase of firearms by troubled individuals identified by law enforcement.

Jury Duty "Retirement" Bill

I will reintroduce legislation to provide for an optional "retirement" from jury service for persons aged 70 and over for local service in state courts.

Election Reform Package



Discussing election reforms with Upper East Side constituent and national labor leader Stuart Applebaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU).

My sponsored legislation to increase government transparency has been signed into law to provide the public with information on candidates running for State offices by maintaining a publicly available list of all candidate websites.



Standing with PS290 Principal Doreen Esposito outside of the school which serves as a poll site on Election Day.

Accountability and fairness in elections is the cornerstone of democracy. That is why I am sponsoring an Election Law Reform package that:

- Enhances resources provided to Election Commissioners
- Streamlines campaign financial disclosure filings
- Provides greater protections to absentee and military voters

Additionally, I am cosponsoring legislation that:

- Establishes online voter registration as part of “Voter Enfranchisement Modernization Act”
- Enacts early voting, automatic voter registration, and no-excuse absentee voting
- Establishes electronic poll registration books at poll sites
- Implements universal voter registration transfer among all New York State counties
- Creates a ballot layout that is easier for voters to read and use
- Combines state and federal primaries into one June primary
- Closes the Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) loophole in the state’s campaign finance laws in order to bring greater transparency and accountability to elections for public office in New York State
- Requires political communications to be attributed to the person(s) or committee who paid for them

Heat Season Rules

As winter approaches, “Heat Season” begins. The period between October 1st and May 31st is designated as Heat Season because of the inclement weather we will experience. Residential building owners in New York City are legally required to provide heat and hot water to their tenants:

- Hot water must be provided 365 days per year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Between 6 AM and 10 PM, if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between 10 PM and 6 AM, the inside temperature must be at least 62 degrees Fahrenheit at all times. There is no outside temperature requirement.

Please file a 311 complaint and follow-up with our office at 212-288-4607 for issues of no heat or hot water in a residential building.

Pumpkin smash

I was pleased to join the BigReuse Pumpkin Smash 2018 on Roosevelt Island organized by environmentalist and island activist Christina Delfico and IDig 2 Learn! Others in attendance included the NYC Ferry, RI Library, RIOG, Main Street Wire, the Girl Scouts, RI Garden Club and islanders who know that the best way to put an old pumpkin to use is to transform it into valuable compost!



The East Side WWI Centennial Commemoration Committee Sergeant York Film Screening



Our office and The East Side WWI Centennial Commemoration Committee presented an evening of distinguished guest speakers, a musical performance and a special screening of Sergeant York at the Lycee Francais de New York. Maria Cooper, daughter of Gary Cooper, was in attendance with Colonel Gerald York, grandson of Sergeant York. A pre-movie discussion was moderated by Harold Holzer, the Jonathan F. Fanton Director of The Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College. To learn more about the work of the committee, visit: <http://eastsidewwicentennial.org/>

Reverse Mortgages for Seniors

I will continue to cosponsor legislation that will allow seniors to obtain reverse mortgages on their cooperative apartments. In consideration of escalating maintenance fees and taxes, this key legislation would allow seniors to continue to reside in their homes by using their hard earned equity.

Specialized High School Admissions

Along with Community Board 8, I hosted a panel to hear from concerned parents regarding the Mayor's proposal to eliminate the SHSAT with representatives from the Department of Education, Professor David C. Bloomfield of Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center, Amy Hsin of Queens College and the NYC School Diversity Advisory Board, and Larry Cary representing alumni of Brooklyn Tech.



As a member of the Assembly Education Committee, I voted "No" in committee to Assembly Bill A10472 which aims to change the admissions criteria of specialized high schools in New York City and to limit the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). There is more to be considered as we enter a new legislative session when this bill will be debated and considered.

PS 290 Rooftop Project Success As Featured in Our Town

"Reaching for the Roof" by *Douglas Feiden*



"Providing 600 kids at P.S. 290 on the UES with a safer place to play than the street has been the dream of parents for years - but the cost was always prohibitive. Until now."

Our office advocated for PS 290, Manhattan New School to be granted an ADA waiver for the completion of a rooftop playspace as an alternative to playing on the street during recess. After years of advocacy, our office's intervention, and coverage in the local newspaper *Our Town*, we can say that the project is forging ahead with commitments from the state and city for additional funding to bring this project to completion.

This is not just about providing a safe play space, this is about meeting the essential developmental needs of our children. We are seeking additional funding to see this project through to completion. Nothing must stand in the way of the well-being and growth of our children.

Fix The Subway: A Call to Action

Train delays have more than tripled since 2012. Subway signal technology from the 1930s is outdated and we have train cars from the 60s and 70s, causing system-wide dysfunction. Likewise, buses are slowing from chronic congestion and severely impacting the quality of life for too many New Yorkers. Unreliable transit hurts people who are missing their appointments, classes and are late to work, costing \$864,000 in lost wages.

This session, I look forward to working with public transportation advocates Riders Alliance and the Coalition to Fix the Subway to demand funding for an accessible and sustainable transit system in the 2019-2020 budget including a comprehensive congestion pricing plan as a dedicated stream of funding for the MTA.

Community Office of Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright
1485 York Avenue, New York, NY 10075



December 2018
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REPORT**

from Assembly Member
**REBECCA A.
SEAWRIGHT**

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Grants Awarded Throughout the 76th District

Our office awarded new funding to district schools, libraries and community centers in the amount of \$1,105,000. PS 158 and Yorkville Middle School are able to complete a security cameras project, PS 183 will improve its resource room, and \$25,000 will be awarded to each Principal of PS 183, Eleanor Roosevelt High School and Yorkville Community School to be used at their discretion. All of the libraries in the 76th District, including Webster, Yorkville, 67th Street

and Roosevelt Island branches will dedicate funding to infrastructure improvements for the heating systems and electrical work. The Neighborhood Center at Holy Trinity Church looks forward to making upgrades to continue its Neighborhood Saturday Supper, the Shelter, Senior Lunch, and the Thanksgiving Project. The National Chorale will continue after school programming at Wagner Middle School.