



Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

Reports to the People of the 81st Assembly District

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Serving the communities of Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Norwood, Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield, and Woodlawn

Dear Neighbor:

Can you believe it's almost 2020? We accomplished so much this year— both here in our own neighborhood and in Albany. And next year is a leap year, so we have an extra day to do even more good things!

We need to fight on many fronts for our community. It seems we are constantly facing battles, new and old, sometimes by government and sometimes by private interests such as developers. For example, the MTA plans to make huge cuts to express bus service in our district. Unacceptable! The NYC Department of Environmental Protection plans to permanently keep empty the northern basin of the historic Jerome Park Reservoir. Disgusting! And it appears that a previously defeated development proposed for Riverdale Avenue may be rearing its ugly head again. Outrageous!

These are just three examples of why it is so important for local residents to be involved, active, and vocal on the important and controversial issues facing us.

The huge success we had in Albany this year in enacting major reforms and new laws that benefit New Yorkers has only whet my appetite for even more in 2020. I am feeling more energetic and excited than ever to build on this year's amazing accomplishments.

My incredible staff and I stand ready to help you with constituent issues you may bring to us. Please feel free to drop by our office or contact us. And we provide free notary service to all constituents as well!

I wish a happy and healthy New Year to all.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz
Member of Assembly



STANDING UP AGAINST OVER DEVELOPMENT:

I will stand up against any proposed overdevelopment on Riverdale Avenue. Any project here must be done in collaboration with the community. Council Member Cohen and I are pictured above on Riverdale Avenue with local residents concerned about the future of this empty lot at West 238th Street. This location is where our community successfully worked together to stop an eleven-story monstrosity proposed in 2013.



COMMUNITY SUPPORTING EACH OTHER: Each year, my office organizes a holiday canned food drive to support two local food pantries that serve our community in the 81st Assembly District: Kingsbridge Heights Community Center and St. Frances of Rome in Wakefield. Thank you to everyone who donated this year!

New York Must Lead on Climate Change

For many decades, scientists and climate experts have been desperately warning about the impact of greenhouse gas emissions (such as carbon dioxide and methane) on our climate. Unfortunately, we are only now seeming to grasp the severity and immediacy of the crisis we are facing as a society. Without severe reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, our planet will experience a continued rise in average temperature – where a change of even one or two degrees will result in the melting of polar ice caps, ocean acidification, and changes in ocean and air currents that affect weather patterns. The tangible impact will be felt by everyone, but particularly people in coastal areas, such as New York City, as we face increasingly severe storms and irregular weather patterns.

In 2019, New York State passed legislation establishing some of the most aggressive emissions reduction targets in the world. Broadly, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act commits New York to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions and an 85% reduction in statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In order to achieve our ambitious goals, there will be a number of advisory councils established for each specific sector and industry that contributes to our overall emissions.

The work doesn't stop here. Although we have established goals, which are a crucial component of achieving progress, we still must come up with a number of strategies to reduce emissions in all aspects of our economy and our daily lives. The transportation sector alone accounts for approximately 35% of New York's greenhouse gas emissions (and growing). I am currently working on legislation which would mandate the purchase of zero-emission buses for mass transit systems, and will continue to work with my colleagues on putting forward new ideas to achieve the important emissions goals we have committed to.

FREE Notary Service

Our office provides free notary service during regular office hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please bring two forms of identification, at least one with your photo and signature, if you would like your signature notarized.

Assemblyman Dinowitz Fights for Universal Healthcare In New York

For many people, healthcare is one of the largest expenses they have – often forcing decisions to be made between seeking medical care and paying rent or buying food. Our healthcare system is an inefficient amalgam of corporate bureaucracies and fragmented networks that restrict people’s ability to choose where to receive medical treatment. I believe it is past time for this to change.

The New York Health Act, which I have supported since my first days as your Assemblyman, would establish a system of universal healthcare in New York State. We would be the first state in the nation to guarantee access to free healthcare and have the opportunity to demonstrate to the nation that this is not only the morally right thing to do, but is fiscally and logistically possible to implement.

Under this plan, there would be no more premiums, no deductibles, no co-pays, and there would be no network restrictions in which you have to operate when choosing a doctor. Although the program would be funded by increases in payroll and other taxes, for 95% of New Yorkers (i.e. those not making millions of dollars each year) overall out-of-pocket costs would be less under the New York Health Act than people are currently paying.

Enacting universal healthcare in New York State is one of my top priorities as we return to Albany in 2020. I am proud to have voted for variations of this legislation each of the five times it has passed the Assembly and many more times in committee. I hope to vote for this legislation one final time in 2020 as we work to ensure that every single New Yorker has access to good quality healthcare.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT RKA: It was a wonderful honor to be included in the Riverdale-Kingsbridge Academy’s “You Make A Difference” program alongside my Chief of Staff, Randi Martos. I am proud to have worked hard with Randi to help create RKA for our community and it is always so inspiring to see the incredible work being done by their staff and students each and every day. Thank you!

Creating Toll Equity for Henry Hudson Bridge

A common source of ire for Bronxites has been the toll across the very-short Henry Hudson Bridge. I am very excited that the MTA has agreed to create a rebate for the Henry Hudson Bridge toll, open to all people with cars registered in the Bronx who opt in to the rebate with EZPass. We are still waiting on details for how to sign up, but are hoping to have more information before the spring of 2020. Once it’s in place, the toll will be free for all Bronx residents who opt into the program.

While this will not impact the future congestion surcharge, this will help reduce some of the bridge shopping that was pushing drivers over to the Broadway Bridge and clogging streets in Kingsbridge and Marble Hill. It is hard to quantify the entire impact on traffic from bridge shopping, but any reduction in traffic and congestion will help reduce air pollution and quality of life for people in the Northwest Bronx.



PROMOTING DIABETES AWARENESS: It was wonderful to join North Central Bronx Hospital for World Diabetes Day. Families are encouraged to learn more about the warning signs of diabetes, particularly for Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for 90% of all diabetes. The most significant risk factors are consumption of unhealthy foods and inactive lifestyles with sedentary behavior. Thank you to Gloria Bent of North Central Bronx Hospital and Community Board 7 for organizing this terrific event!

First Early Voting Test is Smooth Sailing

In 2019, New York State offered early voting for the first time in our history. It was a very smooth process by almost all measures, and I am optimistic that early voting will be a valuable part of our electoral system for many years to come. 2019 was a low turnout election year with not very many major contested elections, but we will certainly have a lot more rigorous of a test in 2020 with two primaries and a general election where we vote on President, Congress, State Assembly, State Senate, and local party positions.



MEETING WITH FUTURE LEADERS FROM PS 7: I had the incredible honor of hosting our future leaders in my office. The Student Leadership team at PS 7 visited my office and we had a lively discussion about how our government is structured, what exactly I do as a member of the New York State Assembly, and how they can best advocate for things they find important. We are in very capable hands!



SUPPORTING MERCHANTS: It was great to join the Riverdale Main Streets Alliance at a recent event. Our communities are strong when there is a thriving network of small, locally-owned businesses filling our commercial corridors.

Let's Rethink City Rules on Development

It's hard to miss. You would be hard-pressed to find an area in the 81st Assembly District that isn't next to or nearby a building being torn down or a new building being constructed. While it is natural for neighborhoods to develop over time, I believe there are severe problems with how the city governs development (and regulates the developers themselves) and those must be corrected.

Here are three areas where I believe the city should make reforms to ensure that development is in the best interest of our community at-large:

1. Restructure as-of-right zoning regulations. If a developer wants to circumvent the public approval process for development, they should have to build something that is good for the community.
2. Require impact fees from all development that changes the use or size of the previous building on that site. This means fees to help pay for extra school seats and teachers, additional buses, increased capacity for utilities, and more.
3. Increase agency oversight of self-certified applications, particularly when involving environmentally sensitive elements such as asbestos.

These are changes that should ultimately happen at the city level, but I will continue to advocate for reforms and stand up for the community when a development is being proposed that is out of scale with what our neighborhoods need.



SUPPORTING KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER: I am excited to dedicate \$250,000 to Kingsbridge Heights Community Center to help provide capital improvements which will rehabilitate their building. This community center is a wonderful resource for the surrounding neighborhoods, offering programs for children and teens as well as meeting space for community organizations.

Heat Season is Here

As a reminder, New York guarantees a right to heat and hot water in all apartments between October 1 and May 31 of each year. Here are the guidelines for your reference:

- Between 6 am and 10 pm (daytime), if the outside temperature falls below 55°F, the inside temperature must be at least 68°F.
- Between 10pm and 6am (nighttime), the inside temperature must always be at least 62°F. There is no outside temperature requirement at night.
- Hot water must always register at a constant temperature of 120°F or more.

If your apartment is not meeting these requirements, please report the condition to the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development by calling 311 or submitting a complaint online. HPD should then send an inspector to your apartment to verify the condition and, if verified, a violation will be sent to your landlord.

My office is available to help follow up on these 311 complaints with HPD if you are having difficulty getting HPD to send an inspector to your apartment or to help remind your landlord of the heating and hot water requirements. It may be helpful for you to maintain a log of your apartment temperatures to more easily demonstrate the problem. Rent regulated tenants may also be eligible to apply for a rent reduction based on decreased services through New York State Homes and Community Renewal.



25 YEARS OF BRONXNET: One of the finest media organizations in New York City, BronxNet has been a staple of public television for a quarter of a century. It was wonderful to join them for their celebration of 25 years, and I look forward to many, many more!

Make the Bus Easier to Use

Among the ongoing efforts to improve bus service in the Bronx, I was baffled to learn that the MTA decided to remove the printed schedules from all bus stops throughout the city. Their claim was that it would save a few hundred thousand dollars per year in printing costs and labor to post them, however I believe this is penny wise and pound foolish. We should be making it as easy and convenient as possible for people to take the bus, and not everyone has access to smartphones (which was the MTA recommendation to replace the printed schedules).

To improve bus service, the MTA will need to invest more money in outer borough service. This means hiring more drivers so that we can have service frequency every 3-5 minutes. This means adding bus stop amenities, in tandem with NYC DOT, such as shelters, seats, and countdown clocks so that people are more comfortable waiting for the bus. People in our neighborhoods rely on bus service more than any other form of mass transit, and it's imperative that the MTA recognizes this by dedicating more attention to improving bus service in tangible ways.



WINDOW INTO THE PAST: I was excited to join the Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Education Center at Manhattan College for the opening of the Herman and Lea Ziering Archival Collection. This is a unique collection of artifacts from the Holocaust, focused on the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, and is an incredible glimpse into the past. Thank you to the Ziering Family for sharing their family's history with the world and also to Dr. Mehnaz Afridi for her continued leadership at this important community institution.

Making the Switch to Zero-Emission Buses

In order to meet our established climate goals, we are going to have to address greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors. I am pleased to share that I have been working on legislation to require all transit agencies in New York State to purchase zero-emission buses beginning in 2029. This will go a long way towards reducing emissions from the transportation sector, and will also have a tremendous positive impact on air quality in urban areas. We all know the feeling of being trapped behind a diesel-burning bus – but hopefully those days are almost behind us.

The legislation will be new in 2020, and it mirrors commitments that the MTA has already made to purchase huge numbers of electric buses. While the transition to a clean, carbon-free future won't be easy, I am hopeful that we will all be better off once we get there.

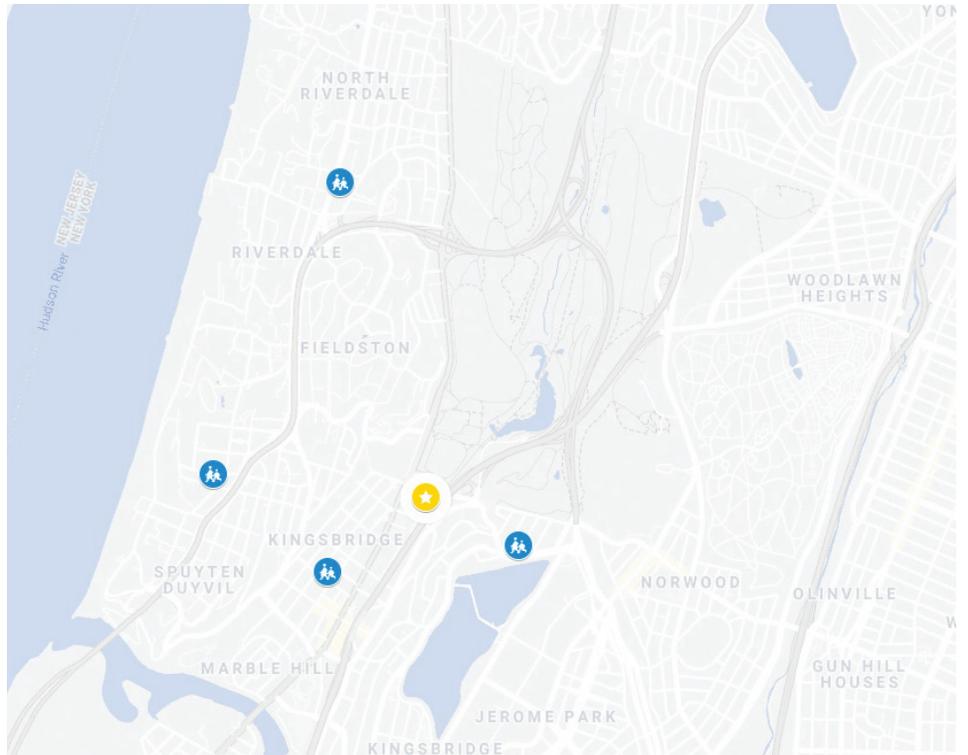
DINOWITZ TO DOE: Seize this Opportunity to Build A New School at the Visitation Site

Many schools in our neighborhood are overcrowded, with classrooms overflowing with children unable to get the attention they need from teachers. District 10 (which covers the majority of our communities) is among the most overcrowded in the entire city. There is existing funding that has been allocated to construct a new school, but so far there have been no plans announced on where that school would be located.

I believe that the site of the former Church of the Visitation and associated school would be a perfect location to build a new school. Not only is the property large enough for the necessary facilities but, since it already has been home to a school before, this usage would preserve what many neighbors are used to.

This location on Van Cortlandt Park South is also perfectly situated to alleviate overcrowding at four schools in the immediate surrounding area: P.S. 7, P.S. 24, P.S. 81, and P.S. 95 (identified by the blue icons on the map below). It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to have such a perfect solution to a huge problem for families all over the Northwest Bronx, and I have been actively lobbying the NYC Department of Education to work with the Archdioceses of New York to use this site for a new school.

Several years ago, when Visitation announced that it would be closing, I contacted DOE to let them know that they should take advantage of this opportunity. I have also met with the Archdiocese along with Council Member Andrew Cohen to check on the status of their required deconsecration process which is necessary to formally remove any religious significance from the site so that it can be used for secular purposes.



MAP AROUND VISITATION SITE: The blue icons indicate existing schools in the surrounding area and the yellow star indicates the site of the Visitation Church and School. The Visitation site is uniquely positioned in the middle of four overcrowded school zones and would have a tremendous impact on reducing average classroom sizes.

It would be an absolute tragedy if this opportunity were allowed to slip by, allowing the site to be turned into some behemoth development that exacerbates already severe traffic congestion, overcrowded classrooms, overcrowded buses, and much more.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz
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**Jeffrey
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Winter 2019-20

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KICKING OFF THE HOLIDAYS:

It was great to join the Woodlawn Taxpayers Association (represented here by Ken Nugent and Shawn Guffey), Council Member Andrew Cohen, Community Leader Eric Dinowitz, and wonderful students from the community to light their tree and kick off the holiday season in Woodlawn!