



# COMMUNITY NEWS

from Assemblyman

# J. GARY PRETLOW

89<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

FALL 2021



*Greetings,*

*This year has been a year of transitioning from a tumultuous year prior. We are making much progress against the Covid-19 pandemic and will continue to do so until we eradicate this virus. We should all be committed and remain steadfast in doing all we can to stop the spread of this disease. Although numbers are down, many are still being affected. We must do all we can to support our health and the health and well-being of those we love as well as our community.*

*I hope the information in this newsletter will be beneficial to you and your family. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read through this newsletter, and please know that my staff and I are always available to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have.*



## SNAP BENEFITS INCREASE

New York State recently announced that New Yorkers enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will receive an increase starting in the month of October. The increase in benefits is a result of a federal cost adjustment focusing on providing low-income individuals and families adequate access to nutritional foods. Households enrolled in SNAP, which falls under the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, will see an increase in regular benefits by about \$36 per person.

Under the new plan, a family of four will receive a benefit increase from a maximum allotment of \$680.00 to \$835.00. This increase will bring \$1.4 billion in additional federal funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2022. An adjustment upward towards the dollar amount of the standard deduction and utility allowances, which are factored into a household's gross monthly income is also included. The gross monthly income level was also increased to reflect economic changes over time. For more information please visit <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-increase-food-benefits-low-income-new-yorkers> or give my office a call and someone can assist you.

## EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ERAP)



Applications to the federally funded **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)** are now being accepted. This program covers household income up to 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). In addition, rental assistance is available for landlords with tenants who have left their rental property or are unwilling to apply for ERAP. This program provides significant economic relief for low and moderate-income households at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability by providing temporary rental assistance.

New Yorkers are eligible for ERAP if they meet a specific criterion. These criteria include having a gross household income at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income. Also, on or after March 13, 2020, if a member of the household received unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in income, incurred high costs, or shared financial hardship, directly or indirectly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Applicants are also eligible if they are obligated to pay rent at their primary residence and have overdue rent at their current home on or after March 13, 2020.

Immigration status is not a requirement for the program. Households that have eligible rent owed may also qualify for help paying utility fees at the same rental unit. These applications for families eligible will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as funds remain available. Once accepted for ERAP, households' benefits will include up to 12 months overdue rental payments accrued on or after March 13, 2020. Up to 3 months of additional rental assistance if the household is expected to spend 30 percent or more of their gross monthly income to pay rent. Also, up to 12 months of electric or gas utility payments for arrears that have accrued on or after March 13, 2020. For more information on ERAP, contact (844-691-7368) and contact my office for assistance at (914-667-0127).

Also, applications are also now being accepted to **The Landlord Rental Assistance Program**. This program can assist landlords with rental assistance if their tenants are unwilling to apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program or if their tenant has already left the rental property. You can apply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 844-691-7368, visiting <https://otda.ny.gov> or contact my office for additional information.

## HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP)

The Home Energy Assistance Program is now open. HEAP helps low-income individuals pay the cost of heating their homes. The HEAP program may be able to help heat your home with electricity, natural gas, oil, coal, propane, wood/wood pellets, kerosene, and corn. The 2021-2022 Regular HEAP benefit opened on October 1, 2021.

For those eligible, you may receive one regular HEAP benefit per program year to help you pay for heating your home. Eligibility and benefits are based on income, household size, the primary heating source, and the presence of a household member under the age of 6, age 60 or older, or permanently disabled.

Regular benefits for households that pay directly for heat based on actual usage are paid directly to the vendor that supplies the household's primary heat source. The participating vendor list can be obtained by accessing the HEAP participating vendor list. Then, select your county of residence, the fuel type you use to heat your home, and press "Go."

For more information on applying, contact the Department of Social Services in Mount Vernon at 914-995-3333 and In Yonkers, at 914-995-3333. Please give my office a call if you would like an application mailed to you.



# 89<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS



## COVID-19 AND OUR HEALTH

Since 2020, COVID-19 has ravaged the lives of so many in our beloved community. Families across New York State have lost loved ones or became violently ill as a result of catching a virus that is easily transmitted. Although the number of daily infections has gone down throughout our area, the disease is still unfortunately among us.

The good news is that thousands of our residents have been fully vaccinated which has saved many lives and is a huge step in advancing efforts to end the pandemic. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go in getting those who are eligible fully vaccinated.

New Yorkers, sixty-five years or older who reside in long term care settings and those eighteen years and older with underlying medications may be eligible for the COVID-19 booster dose.

Please visit <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov> or call 1-800-232-0233 to find vaccine sites near you. Please call my office if additional information is needed.



**CLIP AND RETURN**



*Your questions or comments are important to me. If you have any concerns or issues you would like to discuss with me, please indicate and return to:*

**Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow • 89<sup>th</sup> District**  
6 Gramatan Avenue, Suite 201, Mt. Vernon, New York 10550

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*from Assemblyman*  
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**FALL 2021**

**Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow**



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