



Community Newsletter

ASSEMBLY MEMBER DANIEL O'DONNELL

Manhattan Valley ■ Morningside Heights
Upper West Side ■ West Harlem

FALL 2013

■ SERVING NEW YORK'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT ■

Dear Neighbor,

The leaves have yet to turn, but with Labor Day behind us and the city's schools filling with students, it is clearly time to transition into fall. After a busy summer in the community, I am turning my focus once again to my legislative work and beginning to develop the bills I will introduce and advocate for when the Assembly returns to session. As the only Manhattan member of the Assembly Education Committee, I am paying special attention to education bills that will support students throughout Manhattan and New York State, in addition to those in my own Assembly District.

This month, my newsletter summarizes some of the Assembly's work this year, which includes championing women's rights, labor rights, and gun control, among other things. See the article on the right side of this page for more details.

In honor of the season, the newsletter will also feature a few pieces about education, from an article on the education bills I championed this year, to some important dates and events for families to keep in mind, and an update on my spring Community Reading Challenge.

During my first full session as Chair of the Correction Committee, I've visited four correctional facilities, with plans to visit more, and introduced a number of bills to reduce recidivism rates, improve care for mentally ill inmates, and protect inmates' rights during legal proceedings. For more details on New York State's prison system and my efforts to improve it, refer to the article later in this newsletter.

Returning to our community, my summer Health Fair, hosted in conjunction with the Grant Houses' Family Day, was once again a popular event. Constituents joined us to receive free health information and health screenings from more than a dozen providers, as well as a number of free gym passes and raffled giftcards to local restaurants. My fall Health Fair, hosted with the Children's Aid Society, will be held on November 9th. Please look for more information later in this newsletter and in future updates from me.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and useful. My staff and I are always available to assist you in my Community Office located at 245 W. 104th Street, just off Broadway, or by phone at (212) 866-3970. I encourage you to call, write, or visit us, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM. For those with specific housing problems, I have a dedicated housing specialist on staff available to help every day.

Finally, if you would like to receive more frequent (monthly) updates from me, that include information about community events, programs, and services, please send an email with the subject "subscribe" to odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us.

Very truly yours,

Daniel O'Donnell



Assembly Member O'Donnell debating the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) on the Assembly floor. To watch video of O'Donnell's speech, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIrnveXLsKY>.

Assembly passes Women's Equality Agenda and other crucial progressive legislation

Assembly Member O'Donnell is proud to have supported the Assembly's efforts this year to promote a wide array of progressive issues, including women's rights, labor rights, unemployment benefits, gun control, and many others.

The Women's Equality Agenda included provisions to promote equal pay, combat sexual harassment, increase penalties for human trafficking and protections for victims of domestic violence, and strengthen women's health and reproductive rights under New York law. It passed the Assembly easily, and O'Donnell was proud to vote in favor of it. Unfortunately, the State Senate refused to pass the full bill because of its reproductive health portion, and as the Assembly was unwilling to compromise when it comes to every woman's right to make decisions about her own body, no bill passed both houses. Similarly, the Assembly passed the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) for the seventh time this year, but the Senate has yet to pass it.

During this year's budget process, the Assembly stood up for another often-marginalized group: individuals with disabilities. The Assembly successfully advocated for the full restoration of \$90 million to the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), funding that had been cut earlier in the budget process. OPWDD provides indispensable care and support to one of New York's most vulnerable populations, and the restored funding will ensure that they continue to offer the same high caliber of services to many individuals and families across the state.

Also included in the budget were increases in the Unemployment Insurance Fund to restore its solvency and provide increased benefits for those New Yorkers still suffering from the depressed economy. Workers injured on the job will now receive a minimum worker compensation benefit of \$150 per week, increased from \$100. The general weekly benefit will gradually increase from \$405 to 50% of the state's average weekly wage by October 1, 2026.

Finally, early in the year the Assembly helped pass one of the most highly debated laws this session, the New York SAFE Act (Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act). The SAFE Act enacted such common-sense measures as banning military-style assault weapons, ensuring all gun purchases are subject to a background check, keeping guns away from convicted felons and out of the hands of those who pose a danger due to mental illness, and toughening criminal penalties on those who use illegal guns. Assembly Member O'Donnell was proud to vote in favor of the most comprehensive gun safety law in the country, and stand up for safer, more lawful communities across New York.

With this year's efforts the New York State Assembly has fought to make New York a safer, more prosperous place for all its residents, and O'Donnell plans to continue those efforts when he returns to Albany for the 2014 Legislative Session.

Three important O'Donnell education bills pass Assembly in 2013

As the school year roars back into action, Assembly Member O'Donnell is focusing on improving our city and state's schools. He plans to build on his efforts last year, when three important bills of his passed the full Assembly, and one was signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

First, Assembly Member O'Donnell's Bill A6059a, which concerns student information privacy, passed the Assembly with overwhelming support in June—126 of 150 Assembly members voted in favor of the bill and no members voted against it. It is now being reviewed by the Senate Rules Committee. This bill would require explicit parental consent before a student's information could be included in an online database run by a private company. The database in question holds students' personal information, including name, address, test scores, disciplinary and attendance records, race, ethnicity, disabilities, and other highly sensitive information. Assembly Member O'Donnell believes it is critical that this information is not shared without the consent of the student or the parents; this bill would ensure New York students' right to privacy is protected.

Second, Assembly Member O'Donnell's bill A6058a has also been passed by the Assembly and is being reviewed by the Senate Rules Committee. This bill was drafted in response to the community's outrage when the Education Construction Fund (an offshoot of the Department of Education) proposed to tear down one of three schools—two candidates were P.S. 191 and P.S. 199 on the Upper West Side—and build luxury residential buildings in their place, with spaces for the schools in the basement of the new structures. The bill would protect New York City schools by requiring developers to undergo the Universal Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and

full community review, as almost all other public land transfers must. The two West Side schools were spared because, unfortunately, the School of Cooperative Technical Education, a public high school on East 96th Street, was chosen instead. Clearly, this bill remains an urgent priority, as O'Donnell wishes to prevent anything similar from happening to our neighbors or in our community again.

Lastly, Assembly Member O'Donnell introduced Assembly Bill A0833 in January to expand eligibility for seats on the Citywide Council of English Language Learners (CCELL). This measure passed the Assembly in March and O'Donnell was proud to see it signed into law by the Governor on July 12th.

Teresa Arboleda, the President of the CCELL, urged O'Donnell to sponsor this bill to stabilize the membership of the Council, which advocates for students in bilingual

programs and English Language Learners (ELLs) in general education programs. Previously, nine of the eleven voting members of the CCELL were required to be parents of students currently receiving bilingual or ELL services. As students often test out of ELL programs after only a couple of years, turnover on the council has been high and they have struggled to maintain membership levels. Indeed, there has never been a complete council of 11 members. Currently they only have three. O'Donnell's bill changes the requirements for voting members to include parents of former ELLs, which will enable several dedicated members of the Council to return for another two-year term and pass on their expertise to newer members. With this bill enacted, the CCELL will be more likely to reach a quorum of members and work effectively to represent English Language Learners across New York City.



Assembly Member O'Donnell answering second graders' questions about government at the Manhattan School for Children.

Education updates

CSD3 Seeking to Fill Two Vacancies on Community Education Council 3 (CEC3)

Get involved in school policy and activism by applying to join CEC3! The council currently has two vacancies: one reserved for the parent of a current English language learner (ELL), and one reserved for a high school senior interested in representing the student perspective. **Interested parents of ELLs should contact Mary Kane**, the CEC3 Administrative Assistant, at mkane8@schools.nyc.gov or (212) 678-2782. The application deadline is Friday, September 27th. **Interested high school seniors can learn more about the application process at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/CEC/default.htm>.**

New Common Core-Aligned State Test Results

In August the results of the new Common Core-aligned state tests were released, and, as predicted, the city's scores fell as compared to last year's. Parents can log on to **ARIS Parent Link** (arisparentlink.org) to **view their children's individual scores**. The DOE also created a list of tips for parents unsure of how to talk to their children about their results. To download a PDF of those tips, follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/TipsforFamilies>. For help accessing ARIS or for more information about the tests and how to talk about them with your children, contact your school's parent coordinator, or call D.J. Sheppard, the District 3 Family Advocate, in the District 3 office at (212) 678-5857.

O'Donnell's 10th Annual Community Reading Challenge

This year Assembly Member O'Donnell hosted his 10th Annual Community Reading Challenge. This year's theme was "Dignity for All," and it was his most successful Reading Challenge to date. Children from kindergarten through eighth grade read books about diversity and bullying, and then joined the Assembly Member for three Book Festivals at neighborhood libraries. There, they enjoyed healthy donated food from many local grocery stores (including **Citarella, D'Agostino, Fairway, Gristede's, Samad's Gourmet, and Westside Market**), as well as readings from author and former NFL player **Trevor Pryce**, author **Artie Bennett**, and illustrator **Andrew Glass**. Thanks to generous donations from the **Museum of the City of New York** and **Random House**, every child received a free family museum pass and a copy of the *New York Times* bestseller *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. Several lucky raffle winners also won advance copies of *An Army of Frogs* by Trevor Pryce, or donated gift cards from **Book Culture** and **Bank Street Bookstore**! Visit Assembly Member O'Donnell's website for more info on this year's challenge, and be sure to watch out for next year's!

September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF)

If you are a 9/11 survivor or first responder who became ill or sustained injuries, or a relative of someone who passed away due to the attacks, you can apply for compensation for economic or non-economic losses through the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, or VCF.

If you discovered on or before October 3rd, 2011, that you have an injury or became sick as a result of the September 11th, 2001, attacks, **you must register for economic compensation by**

October 3rd, 2013. You can find out more information about the VCF and apply by visiting www.vcf.gov or calling the **toll-free helpline at 1-855-885-1555**.

Regardless of enrollment in the World Trade Center Health Program, you will still need to register with the VCF to receive benefits. Additionally, even if you filed with the NYS Worker's Compensation Board or your Pension Board, you still need to register with the VCF.



Assembly Member O'Donnell (right), speaking to overjoyed New Yorkers celebrating on June 26, 2013, the day the Supreme Court declared Article 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional. His husband John Banta (left), joined him for the momentous occasion.

Photo: Donna Aceto for Gay City News.

TENANT'S CORNER:

Your Right to a Roommate

In these difficult economic times, living with a roommate can sometimes help tenants make their monthly rent. A roommate is someone who is unrelated to the tenant whose name appears on the lease (called the "tenant of record" under rent control), who pays rent and lives with the tenant. However, some of the rules regarding roommates are complicated.

Under New York State's roommate law (New York State Real Property Law, Section 235-f), rent-stabilized tenants can charge their roommates no more than a proportionate share of the rent. This means that if two people are sharing a two bedroom apartment, the tenant is only allowed to charge the roommate half the rent. This limitation does not apply to rent-controlled tenants—they are allowed to charge a roommate up to, but not more than, the full amount of the legal rent.

Additionally, the number of roommates a tenant is allowed to have varies based on many different factors, which are too numerous to include here. One common example is for tenants who live alone: they are allowed to have one roommate, as well as the roommate's dependent children.

The automatic right to a roommate does not extend to those who reside in public housing. Tenants who receive any type of rent subsidy or reside in public housing should consult with their landlord or the management office before getting a roommate.

Rent-stabilized and rent-controlled tenants whose rents are approaching or above \$2,500 should consider the law regarding high-income deregulation before inviting someone to live with them. This law states that if the household income is \$200,000 or more, and the rent is above \$2,500, the landlord can apply to the state to deregulate the apartment.

If you are considering sharing your apartment with someone and would like further information or guidance on this subject, please contact Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office at (212) 866-3970.

Upcoming education events & deadlines

Thu, September 26, 6:00-7:00 pm:

Homework Strategies Workshop (Joan of Arc Complex, 154 W 93rd St - btw. Amsterdam & Columbus Avenue).

Sat & Sun, September 28 & 29, 10:00-

3:00 pm: Citywide High School Fair at Brooklyn Technical High School (29 Fort Greene Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217 - btw. Fulton & DeKalb).

Tues, October 8, 5:30-7:30pm:

Community School District 3 (CSD3) Middle School Fair at P.S. 163 (163 W. 97th Street - btw. Amsterdam & Columbus Avenue).

Sat & Sun, October 19 & 20, 11:00-

2:00pm: Borough High School Fairs Location TBD - <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Calendar/default.htm>.

Sat & Sun, October 26 & 27: Specialized High Schools Admissions Test for current 8th graders. For testing sites and more information, download the Specialized High School Handbook PDF here: <http://tinyurl.com/SpecializedHS>.

Tues, October 29, 6:00-8:00pm:

CSD3 Middle School Principals Forum at P.S. 76 (220 W 121st Street - btw. Eighth Avenue & Adam Clayton Powell Jr Blvd).

Sat, November 2: Specialized High Schools Admissions Test for current 9th graders, and 8th and 9th grade students with special needs. Download the handbook (link at left) for more information.

Sat, November 2, 10:00am-1:00pm:

CSD3 Elementary School Fair at P.S./M.S. 165 (234 W. 109th Street - btw. Broadway & Amsterdam Avenue).

Tues, November 12, 6:00-7:30pm:

CSD3 Workshop on Common Core Standards. Contact D.J. Sheppard at (212) 678-5857 for more info.

Sun, November 17: Specialized High Schools Admissions Test Make-up test. By permission only.

Mon, December 2:

High School Application Deadline.

O'Donnell's successful first year as correction committee chair

As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Correction, Assembly Member O'Donnell continues to work to pass progressive and common-sense legislation for the benefit of our citizens and correctional system. Tapped in January to lead the Committee, Assembly Member O'Donnell's experience as a public defender and commitment to our most vulnerable citizens makes him well equipped to work with and reform the nation's third-largest prison system.

In his first full session as Chair of the Committee on Correction, Assembly Member O'Donnell visited four correctional facilities: Bedford Hills, Coxsackie, Fishkill, and Riker's Island.

While visiting facilities, Assembly Member O'Donnell and the Corrections staff spoke with inmates and employees to determine their needs and possible improvements. O'Donnell visited classrooms, libraries, and vocational workshops, and toured all areas of each facility, including the Special Housing Units. Based on his visits and conversations, O'Donnell remains committed to strengthening the beneficial programs in our prisons, including GED and college credit courses, inmate hospice care, and job skills training.

Assembly Member O'Donnell is the proud sponsor of numerous bills designed to promote the rehabilitation of inmates and improve the operation of New York's correctional system. In his short time as Chair, he has already passed multiple bills, such as A6531, which ensures that inmates are receiving the rights to which they are entitled during legal proceedings; A7970, which further defines the duties of the parole board staff; and A4583, which relates to the safety of mentally ill inmates. Furthermore, O'Donnell is the sponsor of bills to improve staffing and budget proceedings at correctional facilities, as well as to expand the prison work release program, geriatric parole, and medical parole.

O'Donnell looks forward to continuing to use his position to encourage the proper rehabilitation and education of the prison population. This effort is vital to the reduction of recidivism and to give those who have been incarcerated the tools they need to become self-sufficient and crime-free. He aims to continue this progressive legislative agenda during the coming Assembly session and to continue to improve our state's prison system.

Public scoping meeting regarding JHL plan to construct nursing home on W. 97th St.

Tuesday, September 17th,
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

On Tuesday, September 17th, 2013, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., there will be an opportunity for all interested parties to comment on the scope of the Department of Health's Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding Jewish Home Lifecare's controversial proposal to build a new nursing home adjacent to P.S. 163. This meeting will be held at P.S. 163 at 163 W. 97th Street. If you are unable to attend but would like to submit testimony, **written comments may be sent to:** Mr. Charles P. Abel, Acting Director, Division of Health Facility Planning, New York State Department of Health, Room 1805, Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York 12237, or by email to dhfpdivoffice@health.state.ny.us. Comments will be accepted for a period of ten calendar days following the close of the Public Scoping Meeting.

Assembly Member O'Donnell's Upcoming FREE Legal Clinics

For constituents who need help with legal issues but are unable to come to Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office during the workday, Assembly Member O'Donnell hosts a monthly evening opportunity for constituents to consult with a volunteer attorney.

Call **Joyce** at **(212) 866-3970** to make an appointment.

Upcoming clinic dates:

Sept. 26th • Oct. 31st • Nov. 21st • Dec. 19th

Internships Available

Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office is accepting applications for the fall internship program from individuals who are high school age or older. To apply, please fax or email a cover letter and resume to **(212) 864-1095** or wilsonc@assembly.state.ny.us.

For more information, please call **(212) 866-3970** and ask for **Callie**.

E-Newsletters

Do you want more frequent updates about interesting community events, important government information, and what Assembly Member O'Donnell has been working on? Sign up to receive his monthly electronic newsletters by sending an email to odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us.

Daniel O'Donnell's Community Newsletter

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COMMUNITY OFFICE INFORMATION:

Open Monday through Friday
9:00 AM - 5:30 PM
(212) 866-3970
odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us

Community Health Service Day at Grant Houses

Assembly Member O'Donnell's 10th Annual Community Health Service Day at Grant Houses was a great success this year! Attending groups provided information on a wide variety of health-related topics, including eye health, diabetes, and health insurance options. They also provided free screenings for foot health, Hepatitis C, HIV, and blood pressure. Over 100 community members were able to take advantage of these opportunities.

Thanks to everyone who came out and to all the groups who sent representatives to share their information or services with the community! A special thanks to **Amsterdam Restaurant** and **Toast Uptown** for donating gift cards to the Health Fair raffle, to **SELF Magazine** for donating issues of their publication, and to **Lucille Roberts Women's Fitness** for donating free guest passes. If you were unable to take advantage of the information and services offered by these great organizations, come to Assembly Member O'Donnell's fall Community Health Fair at the Frederick Douglass Houses on **Saturday, November 9th!**

¡Atención!

La oficina de la comunidad del asambleísta O'Donnell tiene disponible empleados que hablan español para asistir al público tiempo completo, lunes a viernes de 9:00 AM a 5:30 PM. La oficina está localizada en el 245 West 104th Street, cerca de Broadway. También pueden llamar a la oficina en horas laborales al (212) 866-3970.

Recuerden que nuestro boletín informativo está disponible en español. Para obtener una copia favor de comunicarse con la oficina del asambleísta Daniel O'Donnell.