



# Community Newsletter

## ASSEMBLY MEMBER DANIEL O'DONNELL

Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

### WINTER 2015/2016

■ SERVING NEW YORK'S 69<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT ■

*Dear Neighbor,*

With a new year ahead of us, I write to highlight some of the issues I worked on in 2015. The Assembly had a busy session, taking up legislation on a wide variety of important issues for our state, including improving our correctional system, expanding access to education for New York's students, protecting our environment, and challenging threats to tenants' rights, among many other issues.

I am pleased to report that the package of legislation titled the 'Women's Equality Act,' passed both the Assembly and the Senate, and that I proudly co-sponsored the bills related to equal pay (A06075) and anti-sexual harassment (A03769). Other provisions in the 'Women's Equality Act' include outlawing discrimination against parents and pregnant women in the workplace, increasing protections for victims of domestic violence, strengthening laws against human trafficking, and safeguarding reproductive health by codifying Roe v. Wade into New York State law. All but one of the bills in this package passed **both** chambers of the legislature and were **signed into law** by Governor Cuomo, marking a victory for all New Yorkers. Unfortunately, safeguarding reproductive health proved to be the one contentious provision that did not pass, but I will continue to advocate for its passage in order to ensure women have full choice over their reproduction.

Last session, the Assembly and I tenaciously fought for the rights of tenants. I am pleased to report that the rent regulation guidelines have been renewed until **June 15, 2019**. There is much more work to be done to protect tenants, and I have several bills that I introduced last session to protect rent controlled and market rate tenants. For more information about how the Assembly has addressed the housing issue, as well as background on the bills I introduced, jump to the "Legislative Highlights" section of this newsletter.

In the community this year, I sponsored several events including the Community Reading Challenge and Summer Health Service day, as well as a brand new no-cost mammogram screening. Additionally, I hosted two events in December 2015: the first was a public hearing addressing crucial oversight of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the second a symposium that addressed implementation of the "Dignity for All Students Act" (DASA). For more information about these events, and details on my upcoming Community Reading Challenge, turn the pages of this newsletter.

Finally, as we've settled into the winter months, keep in mind that your landlord is required by law to provide heat and hot water between October 1st and May 31st. For more information, you may jump towards this newsletter's "Tenant Corner."

I hope you will 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 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM. For those with specific housing problems, I have a dedicated housing specialist on staff available to help every day. And as always, if you would like to receive monthly email updates from me, please send an email with the subject "subscribe" to [odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us).

Finally, I encourage you to follow my official New York State Assembly Twitter & Facebook accounts to get exclusive insight into the work I'm doing in my district and for all New Yorkers by visiting [www.twitter.com/dannyodonnellny](http://www.twitter.com/dannyodonnellny) and [www.facebook.com/danieljodonnellny](http://www.facebook.com/danieljodonnellny).

Very truly yours,

*Daniel O'Donnell*

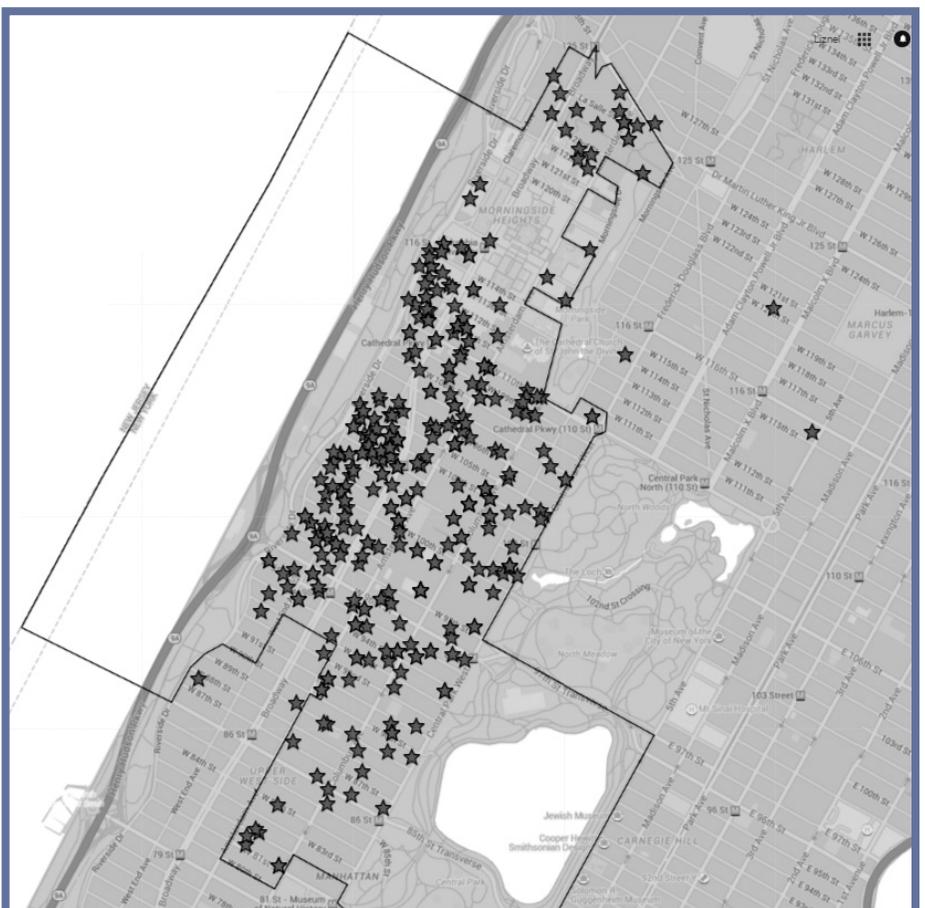
## Direct Assistance for the Community

Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office is dedicated to providing helpful and timely assistance to constituents in order to ensure that their rights are protected, improve the delivery of services from the City and the State agencies, and to enhance the quality of life of the neighborhood. To achieve these goals, staffers in the Community Office directly address and resolve constituents' problems, inform them of special opportunities, bring vital resources to the neighborhood by hosting events, such as Health Fairs and Mammogram Screenings, monthly legal clinics, and Reading Challenges, and, if the office is not best-equipped to address a specific constituent problem, connect constituents to organizations that are better suited to help them solve their issues.

### ¡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.



*Assembly Member O'Donnell's Community Office resolved nearly 500 constituent cases, from all corners of the 69th Assembly District and beyond.*

# Legislative Highlights and Looking Ahead

## Multiple O'Donnell Bills to Reform the Correctional System Pass the Assembly

Assembly Member O'Donnell is proud to report that his bill to modify NY's use of solitary confinement within prisons, A1346a, passed the Assembly. O'Donnell strongly believes that by adhering to the United Nation Committee Against Torture's (UN CAT) recommendations, inmates will be treated more humanely, and that prisons will become safer for those who work and are incarcerated there. O'Donnell understands that much work still remains in trying to make correctional institutions safer and will continue to fight to that end. The bill says that "inmates should only be kept in special housing units for the minimum period of time necessary to maintain institutional order and safety and by prohibiting the placement of juveniles, people with mental illness and developmentally disabled inmates in solitary confinement."

In an important effort to stop using our prisons as defacto mental hospitals, Assembly Member O'Donnell is proud that his bill, A7685, passed both the Assembly and Senate and was signed into law. This bill creates a process to be used when a person on parole has allegedly violated the terms of their parole but lacks the mental capacity to meaningfully participate in a parole revocation proceeding. Under the terms of this bill, such an individual will be sent to Superior Court for a capacity assessment conducted in the same matter as such an assessment in criminal court and then, if found to be incapacitated, will be committed to a mental health facility run by OMH or OPWDD, rather than sent back to prison.

## O'Donnell Sponsors Education Bills to Bolster Education System Improvements

Assembly Member O'Donnell sponsored various education bills in 2015 as a member of the Education Committee. One noteworthy bill is **A4109** which mandates that all New York City schools employ a librarian. Surprisingly, only high schools are required to employ a librarian, leaving younger students without this enormous benefit at a critical stage in their learning process. Assembly Member O'Donnell has also sponsored **A5450**, which mandates radon testing, a naturally occurring gas that may lead to lung cancer, in all school buildings throughout New York State. In 2016, Assembly Member O'Donnell plans to bolster his groundbreaking **Dignity for All Students Act** by introducing a diversity course requirement for teacher certification.

The **Education Investment Tax Credit**, which would have provided a tax credit for donations to private and parochial schools, was not included in the omnibus bill – the final piece of legislation passed in the 2015 session. Assembly Member O'Donnell and his colleagues fought vigorously against this seemingly unconstitutional idea. The Assembly's final compromise on this issue increased funding for non-public schools, which will alleviate some of the concerns that led supporters to advocate for the Education Investment Tax Credit.

The final omnibus bill also included an **adjustment to teacher evaluations to enable more factors to be taken into account when measuring student growth**, including poverty, English Language Learner (ELL) status, students with disabilities, and prior academic history. This will enable a broader look at teachers' and students' performance, and enable schools to avoid focusing too narrowly on student performance on one exam. The agreement will also create a content review committee to oversee standardized tests developed for grades 3 through 8, to make sure the tests are fair, accurate, and appropriate for their grade level.



*Architect reveals plans for renovation of Morningside Retirement and Health Services in Morningside Gardens. Assembly Member O'Donnell secured \$500,000 in state funding to support the redesign.*

## The Assembly Addresses Housing Issues

Last session, the Assembly tenaciously fought for the rights of tenants. The omnibus bill A8323 represents a compromise. The rent regulation guidelines have been renewed until June 15, 2019. **This is only the second time in recent that the laws have been expanded upon renewal.** Some key ways they have been improved include **raising the vacancy decontrol threshold** (the rent at which, upon vacancy, an apartment can be taken out of rent stabilization) to \$2,700 and continuing to raise the threshold based on the Rent Guidelines Board Increase each year thereafter; increasing the penalties for landlord harassment, and **changing the way that Major Capital Improvements (MCIs) are calculated and charged to tenants.** There is much more work to be done to protect tenants, and I have several bills that I introduced last session to protect rent-controlled and market-rate tenants, including A7378, a comprehensive bill that toughens protections for a wide range of renters. This bill includes a cap on rent increases faced by rent-controlled tenants, an end to the fuel surcharge pass-along cost, a full repeal of vacancy decontrol, and a notification requirement regarding rent increases and non-renewal of leases for unregulated tenants.

Also included in the omnibus bill was an extension of the Condo/Coop Tax Exemption through 2018. This bill continues to give families in NYC condos or coops an affordable tax rate, enabling them to remain in their homes and in New York City even if the value of their home has skyrocketed well beyond their means. The 421-a tax exemption for new development was modified to provide for more affordable housing and only extended for seven months pending agreements between labor and real estate on wage protections. It is set to expire again in early 2016, so you may be hearing more about this soon.

## Assembly Member O'Donnell Visits Northern Ireland

In an October visit to Northern Ireland, Assembly Member O'Donnell delivered the keynote address at Amnesty International & The Rainbow Project's "Marriage Equality: How the U.S. Was Won" panel event at Ulster University. Joined by John O'Doherty of the Rainbow Project and fellow Assembly Member Barbara Lipton, O'Donnell spoke on the successes and obstacles that were faced in New York State's fight for marriage equality. That same day, O'Donnell appeared on BBC Radio Ulster with William Crawley to speak on marriage equality and reflect on the need for such legislation in Northern Ireland.

*Assembly Member O'Donnell meets Irish President Michael D. Higgins in Dublin.*



## Meet Our New Staff Members & See Our New Community Office Design

Assembly Member O'Donnell welcomes two new staff members to his District Office – Nicole Migliore and Liznel Aybar-Ventura. Ms. Migliore serves as our Policy Analyst and Ms. Aybar-Ventura as our Community Liaison & Communications Assistant.

During the month of August, our Community Office underwent an exciting remodel and redesign. These renovations have allowed our office to be more functional and have served to make our space even more accessible to constituents. We welcome the neighborhood to visit our space at **245 West 104<sup>th</sup> Street between Broadway and West End Avenue.**



*Assembly Member O'Donnell's Albany Office staff meet with his District Office staff to coordinate legislative priorities for the upcoming year. (August 2015)*

## Constituents Enjoyed Free Services and Giveaways at the Annual Community Health Service Day at Grant Houses

Assembly Member O'Donnell's 12th 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 dental health, nutrition, diabetes, and health insurance options. **Free** services included mammograms, in-depth legal consultations, scheduling foot screenings, memory screenings, and HIV testing. Free giveaways, including dental products and beach balls, were available to all attendees! Over 100 community members were able to take advantage of these opportunities. Assembly Member O'Donnell would like to thank everyone who stopped by and all the groups who sent representatives to share their information or services with the community!

## Landmarking Our Community

Assembly Member O'Donnell is a strong proponent of historic designation in our community. The Upper West Side, Morningside Heights, and Manhattan Valley are filled with historic gems that create a feeling of grandeur and distinct sense of place that one feels when working, playing, and living in the district.

This year, we achieved a victory with the addition of the **Riverside-West End Historic District Extension II**. Assembly Member O'Donnell is thankful to the **Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)** and the **City Council** for the recent approval, extending historic protection from 94th Street to 108th Street. Altogether, the historic district now runs from West 70th Street to West 108th Street and includes parts of Broadway, sections of Riverside Drive, and all of West End Avenue.

Unfortunately, there is still much more work to be done. The need for a comprehensive historic district in Morningside Heights, from Riverside Park to Morningside Park has never been as imperative as it is now. We must continue to call on the LPC, Mayor de Blasio, and the City Council to keep their commitment to our community and landmark Morningside Heights. Assembly Member O'Donnell would like to give a special thanks to the community members who have also worked incredibly hard in this endeavor, including Landmarks West!, Morningside Heights Historic District Committee, and the West End Preservation Society.

## Full Scholarship to SUNY Maritime

Assembly Member O'Donnell is happy to announce that he is looking to nominate one student to SUNY Maritime College's Cadet Appointment Program (CAP), which is a four-year full tuition scholarship. The scholarship is designed for a first-time college student who plans to start attending SUNY Maritime in the Fall 2016 Semester. If interested, please contact Justin in Assembly Member O'Donnell's office for more information as soon as possible.

## The CitiBank Building on Broadway & 111<sup>th</sup> Street

In January of 2014 a fire struck the Citibank building on Broadway and 111th Street. To date, the site remains vacant and the temporary structures around it have created a general blight on the block. In May of 2015, Assembly Member O'Donnell called a meeting with Citibank, several neighbors and local business owners to discuss the construction delay, conditions surrounding the building, and general safety in the area. Amid concerns that a skyscraper would replace the building, Citibank assured the community that they intend to reopen a bank within the existing structure.

Since the meeting in May, our office has been monitoring the development of the Citibank reconstruction. In September, the reconstruction company found asbestos in the building, and the ceiling of the structure partially collapsed. Citibank has informed Assembly Member O'Donnell that asbestos abatement was completed as of December 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. A structural review is currently taking place, and the permit application process for reconstruction may begin subsequently. We will continue to monitor the situation and keep you informed.

## Rodent Academy & Rat Reservoir Pilot Program

In 2015, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) launched a **Rat Reservoir Pilot Program**, which seeks to eliminate rat infestations in especially affected neighborhoods. This Pilot Program, which serves tenants, businesses, and building owners, focuses on the area from **105th to 110th Streets between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue**. Assembly Member O'Donnell has been working closely with DOHMH to help advertise this Pilot Program. In addition to locating areas of rat activity, baiting city-owned spaces, and pest-proofing public infrastructure to prevent the re-emergence of rats, DOHMH is providing individualized services to tenants and building owners.

In order to review successes and challenges in the Pilot Program areas, Assembly Member O'Donnell is again sponsoring a **free Rodent Academy** in conjunction with **Community Board 7**, the **Columbus Amsterdam BID**, and the **Ascension Church**. This free event will cover several topics, including prevention tactics, how to conduct an inspection, how to treat a rat problem, and how to supervise pest control companies.

The Rodent Academy will be held on **Thursday, January 14th, from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.** at the **Ascension Church** (22 W. 107th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue). A free rat-resistant garbage can provided by the Department of Health will be given to the first 25 households to RSVP. Spanish language translation is available upon request. Please RSVP for this event by contacting Justin Simmons, Assembly Member O'Donnell's Director of Constituent Services, at 212-866-3970.

## Beware of Telephone Scams & Robo Callers

Warning! Assembly Member O'Donnell has seen an increase in telephone scams reported to his office. Telephone scams may be in the form of pre-recorded messages, or "robo-calls," or a live caller. Unfortunately, scammers tend to target older adults and seniors. *Please review these common telephone scams:*

**IRS scam:** Scammers will allege to be an IRS agent or the police, demanding payment for overdue taxes. The caller may claim that if you do not pay, you will be arrested. Please note: **The IRS will never contact you by telephone.** If the IRS attempts to contact you, they will do it via postal mail.

**Lottery scam:** Scammers will allege that you have won a lottery, either within or outside of the United States. The scammer will often use an official sounding name, such as that of a government representative, or say they are from "Washington DC." They will ask that you pay upfront fees, taxes or interest, in order to collect the winnings. **If you do not remember entering a lottery, do not divulge any personal information.**

**PC Cleaner scam:** Scammers will claim that your personal computer is sending them a message that it has a virus or is being hacked. Often, the scammers purport to be from Microsoft or an official sounding technology company. They will offer to fix the problem for a fee. **If your computer indeed has a virus or is being hacked, it will not send any type of notification.** Often, the services that they are offering actually cost much less than the quoted price.

**Never give out any personal information, including your name, age, address, social security number, credit card or banking information over the phone to an unknown caller.** If you believe you are the victim of a scam or have been approached by a scammer, you may file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission here: <http://1.usa.gov/21ee4W9>

## Tenant's Corner

Tenants have the right to essential services. This is true for all people living in public housing, as well as tenants who are either rent stabilized or rent controlled. It is also the case for tenants who have market-rate leases and those with proprietary leases for apartments in coop buildings.

Heat and hot water are among the most important essential services. The law requires that hot water be maintained at 120 degrees throughout the year and twenty-four hours a day. Beginning on October 1st, of every year, landlords are required to heat their buildings at no less than 68 degrees from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees. In the night time hours, (from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.) apartments must be 55 degrees or warmer, if the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees. If you are unsure of the inside temperature, consider purchasing an indoor thermometer.

In addition to heat and hot water, essential services are defined broadly as those needed to prevent danger to life or safety or services which, when denied, are detrimental to the health of tenants. Fact Sheet #14, published on the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal's website, refers to the following as essential services: cold water, superintendent services, maintenance of front or entrance door security, garbage collection, elevator service, gas, and electricity and other utilities, but this is not an exhaustive list.

**If services, whether classified as essential or not, are not maintained, the staff at Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell's Office is available to assist you.** They can advise you on how to proceed to make an effective demand on your landlord. With any lapse in services, tenants should always call their landlord and follow up immediately with a written letter sent through the US Postal Service using return receipt requested. In the event that the problem is not immediately addressed, a call to 311 to request an inspection by the city is often advisable. Make sure you record the tracking number assigned to your complaint.

New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) tenants should call at (718) 707-7777 and write down the ticket number assigned to the complaint. If the problem persists for more than two or three days, encourage your neighbors to make additional calls.

**Assembly Member O'Donnell's Housing Specialist can be reached at (212) 866-3970.**

## 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:**  
January 28<sup>th</sup> • February 25<sup>th</sup> • March 24<sup>th</sup> • April 28<sup>th</sup>

## Green Roof Tax Abatement Program

Green roofs, or vegetation-covered roof surfaces, benefit property owners in numerous ways. They can improve quality of life, thanks to noise reduction; increase property values; and beautify a property for owners and neighbors. While there are up-front installation costs, green roofs reduce energy and maintenance costs by protecting rooftops and building equipment from excessive sun exposure during warmer seasons and increase heat retention during cooler seasons.

Recognizing these benefits, the City of New York and New York State passed legislation in 2008 to provide a **one-year tax abatement, or tax relief**, of \$4.50 per square foot (up to \$100,000 or the building's tax liability, whichever is less). Amended in 2013, the tax abatement is now available through March 15, 2018. For more information, please visit <http://on.nyc.gov/1NYLpe6>.

## Community Office Seeks Winter/Spring Interns & Semester Fellow

Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell's New York City community office is seeking Winter/Spring Interns & a Semester Fellow. Students interested in public service will have the opportunity to get real-life experience in an active, fast-paced, New York City government office. The program offers interns the chance to engage in legislative research, offer administrative support, and help with constituent services. Successful candidates are personable and have strong research and writing skills. We aim to create an experience that is tailored to individual interests while exposing students to the dynamic day-to-day work of elected officials. Spanish-speaking is a plus. Interns and semester fellowship are unpaid. To learn more about Assembly Member O'Donnell, please visit his Assembly webpage at: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Daniel-J-O%27Donnell/>

### How To Apply:

Please email resume and cover letter to [simmonsj@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:simmonsj@assembly.state.ny.us)

## Daniel O'Donnell's Community Newsletter

Assembly Member ■ 69<sup>th</sup> District

Upper West Side • Morningside Heights • Manhattan Valley



### COMMUNITY OFFICE INFORMATION:

Open Monday through Friday  
9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.  
(212) 866-3970  
[odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us)

## Assembly Member O'Donnell's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Reading Challenge

For the 2016 Community Reading Challenge, we are shaking things up a bit. The upcoming Reading Challenge will be held in January and February rather than in the spring. Reading lists were published before students went on winter break in order to encourage them to read during their time off. This year's theme is space exploration, with the tagline, "To Infinity and beyond!" The book list is filled with intergalactic adventures, biographies of the first astronauts, history of the space race, and of course, aliens.

*Please join us at the 2016 Reading Festivals, which will be held at the following local libraries:*

**Morningside Library** • January 28 from 4 p.m.-5 p.m.

**Bloomington Library** • January 29 from 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

**George Bruce Library** • February 17 from 4 p.m.-5 p.m.

The list may also be found on Assembly Member O'Donnell's website, <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Daniel-J-O'Donnell/>. Additionally, feel free to call the office to ask for a hard copy of the list. Happy reading!

## 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](mailto:odonnell@assembly.state.ny.us). Additionally, follow Assembly Member O'Donnell's official Twitter & Facebook accounts to get exclusive insight into the work he is doing in the district and for all New Yorkers by visiting [www.twitter.com/dannyodonnellny](http://www.twitter.com/dannyodonnellny) and [www.facebook.com/danieljodonnellny](http://www.facebook.com/danieljodonnellny)