

Assembly Member

# Rebecca A. Seawright

## Community Bulletin

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Dear Neighbor,

What an incredible few months. In mid-October, our office held a productive and heavily attended public hearing on Senior Consumer Fraud; I look forward to using the troubling information obtained in the hearing toward future legislation. Our office also hosted a Halloween Open House at which some of our younger neighbors had the opportunity to show off their incredible Halloween costumes. To top it all off, three pieces of legislation that I sponsored this year have been signed by Governor Cuomo: legislation supporting clean water projects in our state, legislation that helps divorcing parents save time and money and legislation clarifying RIOC's ability to distribute Public Purpose Funds on Roosevelt Island.

I am also thrilled to announce that our office was able to obtain funding for a number of truly remarkable nonprofit organizations in our district, a few of which I will highlight here. One agency to receive funding was Eviction Intervention Services, a resource that our office turns to on a regular basis for assistance with helping constituents avoid eviction. Another notable group is the East 86th Street Merchants/Residents Association, which will use the funds on beautification projects on the 86th Street Corridor and beyond.

As the weather gets colder, things are starting to heat up for the New York State Legislature. I have some exciting new legislation in the pipeline, including legislation that provides individuals over the age of 70 with the ability to opt out of serving jury duty and another bill that will implement residency requirements on the President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.

I wish you all a warm and happy holiday season! As always, if my office can be of service, please do not hesitate to visit us at 1365 First Avenue, between 73rd Street and 74th Street.

My Best,



Rebecca A. Seawright  
 Member of Assembly, 76th District

## Jury Duty Opt-Out

Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright is in the process of filing legislation concerning seniors and jury duty. The bill would extend at a state level the same opt out available to individuals 70 years of age and older selected for federal jury service.

Currently, New York excuses jurors who provide a note from a doctor stating that their disability prevents them from serving jury duty, but this imposes a daunting and sometimes expensive burden on seniors and does not apply to many for whom jury service is possible but challenging. Assembly Member Seawright first noticed a need for this legislation after receiving phone calls from older constituents who are not disabled but for whom travel is difficult.

This legislation will be introduced 20 years after 27 previous exemptions and disqualifications for jury duty in New York State were repealed. The majority of the previous exemptions and disqualifications applied largely to doctors and lawyers; such white collar exceptions will not be included in the Assembly Member's bill.

Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright's legislation would simplify the process of opting out for New York's vulnerable senior population.

## Our Continued Fight Against the Dump

Just last month, the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) received permit renewals from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to continue construction of the East 91st Street Marine Transfer Station (MTS).

The NYSDEC's decision came in response to and in spite of over 22,000 public comment letters that detailed the changed conditions in the neighborhood.

Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright, in conjunction with Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Senator Liz Kruger, Senator Jose Serrano, Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez, Assembly Member Dan Quart, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Council Member Dan Garodnick and Council Member Ben Kallos, wrote to the NYSDEC condemning their decision and reminding them of the flooding and air quality concerns in this community.

### *In an excerpt from the letter the elected officials wrote:*

*Of particular importance is the Marine Transfer Station's location in what FEMA calls an "area subject to inundation" in terms of potential flooding. Despite this classification, the New York City Department of Sanitation insists on building a solid waste facility in an area prone to flooding, no matter the cost or danger to City residents.*

*In addition to flooding concerns, this facility also poses a great threat to air quality in an already asthma-plagued community. The fine particular matter (PM2.5) emitted by the garbage trucks entering and exiting the site will be especially harmful to those in the surrounding community, specifically to the neighboring children and patients visiting the growing network of nearby hospitals.*

*We maintain that there are serious air quality and flooding issues that are not being adequately addressed and respectfully request that the NYSDEC reevaluate its decision to renew these permits.*

Assembly Member Seawright continues to believe that a dump has no place on the Upper East Side or any other heavily residential community. In 2016, Assembly Member Seawright will continue her fight to pass her anti-dump bill, A 5264-A. Additionally, the Assembly Member is exploring the possibility of introducing a new piece of legislation aimed at stopping the dump.

## Protect Your Rights — Form a Tenants Association

Organizing a tenants association is an excellent way to encourage your landlord to make repairs or improve services in your apartment building. All tenants have the right to organize a tenants association to ensure that the building's residents are heard, regardless of whether the units are rent regulated or market rate.

Tenants associations, while time and energy intensive, allow residents to form a unified front to best address building-wide issues with the landlord.

The Lenox Hill Neighborhood House has a detailed manual dedicated to organizing a tenants association and can be called for assistance with forming an organization at 212-744-5022. The Metropolitan Council on Housing is also a wonderful resource for setting up a tenants association and can be reached at 212-979-6238.

To view LHNH's manual, visit [www.mynacc.org/crfg/Tenant\\_Organizing\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.mynacc.org/crfg/Tenant_Organizing_Manual.pdf). To view the Metropolitan Council on Housing's website, visit <http://metcouncilonhousing.org>.



*Jamie Rubin, Commissioner of Homes and Community Renewal and Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright meet at the Community Office with Roosevelt Island residents, Sanjiv Tandon, Howard Polivy and Ian Kross to discuss affordable housing.*

## Second Avenue Subway Updates

On October 28th the Metropolitan Transportation Authority approved a program that cuts \$1 billion of funding originally earmarked for Phase II of the Second Avenue Subway. The reductions will result in the delay of the Second Avenue Subway's expansion beyond 96th Street. While the planned stations are not located in our district, the impacts of these cuts will be felt by riders of the crowded 4, 5, 6 train, a line that will not see the degree of relief that was once anticipated if the alternative line is shortened.

The cuts caught countless federal, state and city officials by surprise and have triggered outrage throughout New York. An MTA representative has denied that Phase II is in jeopardy and insists that the expansion will move forward.

At a press conference following the announcement, Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright and other elected officials demanded that the MTA restore funding. Members of the New York State Legislature will have the opportunity to review and vote on the Capital Plan when they return to Albany in 2016.



*Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright stands with NY Senator Jose M. Serrano, NY Senator Adriano Espaillat, NY Senator Liz Krueger, NY Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, NYC Council Member Dan Garodnick and NYC Council Member Ben Kallos, among others, in calling for the restoration of funds to complete Phase II of the Second Avenue Subway.*



*Assembly Member Seawright presents Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney with the Women's Leadership Award for her years of public service at the 11th Annual CUNY/New York Times Women's Leadership Conference.*

## New York State Scholarship Program

One important aspect of the last budget passed by the Assembly establishes a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Incentive Program which provides full scholarships for students graduating from a New York high school who are ranked in the top 10% of their high school class and who commit to work full-time in a STEM field and reside in New York for five continuous years upon college graduation. Eligible students must enroll in an approved undergraduate program at a SUNY or CUNY college. Students must remain in a full-time study program while maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher each term after the first semester. The scholarship covers the full cost of tuition as long as the student remains in compliance with the scholarship's terms. For more information about this program, please contact the HESC Scholarship Unit at [scholarships@hesc.ny.gov](mailto:scholarships@hesc.ny.gov) or 1-888-697-4372.



*Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright announces the success of her senior consumer fraud hearing with Senator Liz Krueger at the Senator's 9th Annual Senior Resource Fair, where over 50 exhibitors lined up to assist older adults on the Upper East Side and beyond.*

## Consumer Fraud Hearing on the Upper East Side

On Wednesday, October 21st, 2015, Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright, in her capacity as the Chair of the Subcommittee on Consumer Fraud Protection, co-hosted a budget hearing at the Lenox Hill Neighborhood House to discuss the use of state funds to combat instances of senior consumer fraud. Assembly Member Dinowitz, Chair of Consumer Affairs and Protection Committee and Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz, Chair of the Aging Committee joined Assembly Member Seawright for the heavily attended hearing, which she insisted be held in her district rather than in downtown Manhattan (where legislative hearings traditionally take place) in order to better accommodate her district's senior population.



*Chair of the Subcommittee on Consumer Fraud Protection Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright co-hosts a Senior Consumer Fraud Public Hearing in October alongside Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs and Protection Jeffrey Dinowitz and Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Aging Steven Cymbrowitz..*

The hearing was held to solicit testimony on the Department of State's budget allocation and utilization of existing resources and to identify new legislative and budget solutions to protect vulnerable consumers.

Representatives from the Office of Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, the Elder Abuse Unit of the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and the NYC Department of Aging testified at the hearing. Two organizations spoke with particular emphasis on senior concerns: the Alzheimer's Association's Legislative Representative Bill Ferris and AARP Executive Council Member and 76th Assembly District Constituent, James Arnold. Other individuals who provided testimony at the event included Sharon Birenbaum of Betty Cooper Wallerstein's East 79th Street Residents Association and Joyce Short of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association.

## Women's Equality Act Signed Into Law on the Upper East Side

Originally proposed in 2013, Governor Andrew Cuomo's Women's Equality Act Legislation was signed by the Governor on October 21st, 2015. The signing of this legislation took place at the historic Roosevelt House on the Upper East Side. The Women's Equality Act consists of eight bills to protect and secure the rights of women in New York.

The improvements in this important piece of legislation include equal pay for women in the work force, the expansion of the definition of "employer" in sexual harassment cases, attorney's fees in discrimination cases involved in employment, credit and housing, the ending of discrimination based on familial status, pregnancy and status of domestic violence victims, and the new program for receiving temporary orders of protection electronically. What was not approved for the Women's Equality Act was Governor Cuomo's proposed bill for abortion. Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright supports and advocates for women's rights as she continues to fight to codify *Roe v. Wade* into New York State Law.

For more information on the Women's Equality Act please visit: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-signs-legislation-protect-and-further-women-s-equality-new-york-state>.



*Assembly Members Rebecca Seawright, Donna Lupardo, Michelle Schimel, Jo Anne Simon and Latoya Joyner celebrate the signing of the Women's Equality Act.*

## Seawright's Maintenance Law Featured in the New York Law Journal

On October 28, 2015, the New York Law Journal published an article about Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright's second bill to be signed into law. The legislation requires that child support orders contain provisions specifically stating the amount of child support that will be owed once spousal maintenance is terminated, eliminating the need for parents to seek a modification in court upon the maintenance period's conclusion. By calling for an automatic adjustment of child support owed once the spousal maintenance award is terminated, the law will save divorced parents time and money.

The law also specifies how child support should be awarded when the payor is also responsible for spousal maintenance payments.

### New York Law Journal

The legislation clarifies that the formula for calculating child support should classify spousal maintenance paid or to be paid to the payee as taxable income to the payee, not the payor. The rationale for the clarification is that spousal maintenance actually paid or to be paid is money no longer available as income to the payor and, as a result, should constitute income to the payee for purposes of calculating child support and for tax purposes.

The bill received support from the Pace Women's Justice Center, The Legal Aid Society, the New York Legal Assistance Group, Family Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, and the New York State Unified Court System and passed the Assembly and Senate virtually unanimously.

### Grants to Improve Our Community

The Citizens Committee for New York City is currently accepting applications for grants of up to \$3,000 for resident-led groups wishing to work on community and school improvement projects and generally improve the quality of life across New York City. Neighborhood groups, public school-based groups, and NYCHA tenants associations are all eligible to apply for the grants.

**The deadline for applying is January 26th, 2016.**  
**Those interested in learning more may contact Tehmina at 212-822-9563 or [tbrohi@citizensnyc.org](mailto:tbrohi@citizensnyc.org).**



*Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright participates in a panel at the 11th Annual CUNY/New York Times Women's Leadership Conference panel with Assembly Members Deborah Glick and Diana Richardson and Senator Toby Stavisky.*



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**Rebecca A.  
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## Attention Women Over 40 – Free Mobile Mammography

**Tuesday, February 2nd, 2016** the Office of Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright will proudly host the **Project Renewal ScanVan**.

Starting at 8:00 a.m., all women 40 and older who have not had a mammogram within the past year may make an appointment to visit the ScanVan for a free mammogram.

All insurance plans are accepted and co-payments and deductibles are waived. The service is free for uninsured women.

**The ScanVan will be parked outside of the Community Office located at 1365 First Avenue between 73rd & 74th Streets.**

Please make an appointment by calling 1-800-564-6868.

