

Assemblyman

Jeffrey Dinowitz

Reports to the People of the 81st Assembly District

SPRING 2015

District Office: 3107 Kingsbridge Avenue, Bronx, New York 10463 • (718) 796-5345
Norwood Satellite Office: 3450 Dekalb Avenue, Bronx, New York 10467 • (718) 882-4000, ext. 353
Albany Office: 941 Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12248 • (518) 455-5965
Email: DinowitzJ@assembly.state.ny.us

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

Dear Constituent:

I am happy to report that for the first time in history, a Bronxite, Carl E. Heastie, my friend and colleague, was elected speaker of the New York State Assembly. He represents a district immediately to the east of ours, in the Northeast Bronx. I am confident that he will be a highly effective leader of the Assembly, and I look forward to continuing to work with him.

Currently, we are working on the 2015-16 state budget. At the top of the agenda is our fight to properly fund our schools and ensure that the state complies with the court ruling in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. Unfortunately, the Governor is more focused on issues such as tying teacher evaluations to standardized tests and increasing the number of charter schools, rather than providing our kids with the necessary resources for them to receive the best possible education. Even after we pass the budget we have many key legislative priorities to address this year. First and foremost, the renewal and strengthening of the rent protection laws, which I talk about in depth in this newsletter.

In every neighborhood in our district we are working on a wide range of issues, including fighting for sensible development and against over-development, working with the Department of Transportation to ensure our streets are as safe as can be, fighting to improve bus service, and much, much more.

Many people come in to my office every day for our free notary service, or help with SCRIE/DRIE applications, and countless other issues, and my superb staff works very hard to resolve each and every issue brought to our attention. If you have an issue you would like to discuss, please feel free to call, email, mail, fax, or drop in, and we would be more than happy to help you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz
Member of Assembly

Assemblyman Dinowitz Stands With Tenant Groups for Strong Rent Laws



Assemblyman Dinowitz and tenants from throughout the city; along with Assembly colleagues Victor Pichardo, Linda Rosenthal and Michael Blake, rallied in Albany to renew and strengthen tenant protection laws.

The NYS Assembly will consider many issues this legislative session, but few are of greater importance to NYC residents than the tenant protection laws that are due to expire on June 15th. These laws regulate over a million rent-stabilized and rent-controlled apartments in the City, protecting millions of residents from large rent increases and guaranteeing their right to a lease renewal. Strong rent laws must be at the center of any efforts to ensure that middle class and working people can afford to stay in NYC.

Even under the current rent laws, landlords can raise rents by huge amounts. Installing a new boiler or renovating a recently vacated apartment allows a landlord to charge tenants Major Capital Improvement (MCI) or Individual Apartment Improvement (IAI) rent increases, even if the existing infrastructure was intact and fully functional. While a rent-stabilized tenant's rent can only increase by a certain percentage each year, set by the Rent Guidelines Board, a new renter will see an apartment's rent jump by 20% from what the former resident paid in addition to the normal increase. These massive vacancy increases give unscrupulous landlords an incentive to encourage apartment turnover through harassment and other illegal means.

There is much work to be done in order to strengthen these laws, including making MCI and IAI increases temporary, allowing landlords to recoup their investment but not profit indefinitely from it; eliminating the 20% vacancy allowance on apartments; passing legislation to make sure state programs such as SCRIE and DRIE are permanently funded; and Assembly Bill A.1795, which I authored, which would prevent landlords from increasing rent if a tenant installs appliances such as air conditioners, washers, or dryers. The importance of not only renewing, but strengthening these laws cannot be overstated, and I will continue to fight for them.



Assemblyman Dinowitz was selected to be March's "Friend of the Month" by the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park. Friends of Van Cortlandt Park has proven time and again to be a dedicated group that has not only improved the park, but our community as well. He is pictured here at a park clean up in the Woodlawn section of Van Cortlandt Park.

Assemblyman Dinowitz Continues to Fight for Better Bus Service in the Northwest Bronx

Bus service in the Northwest Bronx has been inadequate, especially since service was cut back in 2010, and I have persistently called on the MTA to add buses to the Bx7 and Bx10 bus lines to address this issue. Long wait times and crowded buses are all too familiar to many in our community, lengthening daily commutes and discouraging residents from using public transportation.

After I as well as other elected officials called attention to this issue, the MTA undertook several changes intended to improve service, including temporarily adding buses to the Bx7 during weekday

evening rush hours, improving communication systems between bus drivers to minimize bus bunch-ups, and eliminating the practice of having certain No. 1 trains turn around before reaching the Bronx during rush hours, which increased the volume of bus passengers at the West 231st Street stop. While these are promising signs that the MTA is seeking to address our community's concerns, I believe that the only way to truly resolve this problem is to permanently add buses to the bus lines that run throughout the Northwest Bronx, and I will continue to press the MTA to do so.



Assemblyman Dinowitz walked through the Marble Hill Houses as part of an effort to address issues relating to garbage and rodents. He is shown here with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Andrew Sandler from Council Member Andrew Cohen's office, Community Board 8 Housing Chair Paul Ellis, and representatives of the New York City Housing Authority.

Assemblyman Dinowitz Testifies at City Council Hearing to Protect Specialized High Schools

Recently, I testified at a New York City Council hearing on diversity in New York City schools. I find the non-representative demographics of many of New York City's schools, particularly in the city's Specialized High Schools, to be extremely troubling. I do not believe that adding subjective criteria to the Specialized High Schools' admissions process such as grades or attendance is the answer. These educational institutions have admissions processes that are unaffected by political influence, athletic prowess, or family legacies; it is a truly objective system. And although these schools' current student bodies do not reflect the demographics of this city, over half are eligible for free or reduced lunch, many are immigrants or children of immigrants, and less than a quarter are white.

In my testimony to the Council, I recommended that the Department of Education provide all students access to free tutoring and preparatory classes in advance of the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). I also suggested that the SHSAT be given to all eligible students, rather than just those who know to sign up. These changes would help even the playing field for many students, and possibly increase diversity in the Specialized High Schools in a way that does not undermine the objective nature of the schools' current admissions process. The City Council itself has no power to change the admissions criteria, only the state legislature can do that, and I will do everything in my power to block such legislation in the Assembly.

Assemblyman Dinowitz Warns Bronx Residents of Green Dot MoneyPak Card Scams

In recent months, scammers claiming to represent Con Edison and the IRS have called residents in the Northwest Bronx, including myself, threatening drastic action, such as cutting off the consumer's electricity, unless fictional legal debts are paid immediately. The scammers often demand payment using Green Dot MoneyPak cards, which are readily available in local pharmacies and convenience stores. The 50th Precinct issued the following tips to help protect yourself from falling victim to these scams:

- **Utility companies and government agencies will never contact you by phone demanding immediate payment via MoneyPak**
- Be suspicious of callers who demand immediate payment for any reason.
- Remember that anyone who has the number on a Green Dot MoneyPak card has access to the funds on the card.
- Never give out personal or financial information to anyone who emails or calls you unsolicited.
- Never wire money, provide debit or credit card numbers or Green Dot MoneyPak card numbers to someone you do not know.

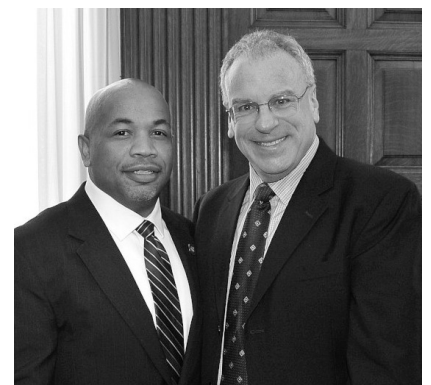
For more information, or if you would like a flier about these scams, please contact our office at (718) 796-5345.



Assemblyman Dinowitz is pictured here with Governor Andrew Cuomo after he gave his annual State of the State Address.



During his visit to Puerto Rico for the annual Somos el Futuro Conference Assemblyman Dinowitz met with the Mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz. What a beautiful city she runs!



Assemblyman Dinowitz is shown here in Albany with newly elected Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie. They represent neighboring districts in the Bronx and have worked closely together for many years.

Legislation in Albany

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

This bill would require the labeling of sugar-sweetened beverages. Extensive research has revealed that there is a significant link between consuming copious amounts of sugar found in sweetened beverages and numerous health risks including obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay. This bill ensures that consumers are warned of the dangers of consuming sugar-sweetened beverages prior to purchase. The Consumer Affairs Committee will likely be holding a hearing on this bill during this legislative session.

Automatic License Plate Readers

This bill would prohibit the use of Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology except by law enforcement agencies in New York State. While this innovative technology is most effective for officials to aid and assist in catching criminals, it is also currently available for any business or individual that seeks to use it. Not only does this raise serious concerns, but it also infringes upon innocent New Yorkers and their inherent right to privacy.

My bill would prohibit businesses and individuals from using this technology and create guidelines for the use of such technology by law enforcement agencies in New York.



Showing support for New York City's police force, Assemblyman Dinowitz attended the 50th Precinct Community Council meeting with State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Council Member Andrew Cohen, and 50th Precinct Deputy Inspector Paul Rasa.

Dinowitz Successfully Advocates for More Parking on Stevenson Place

Recently I visited Van Cortlandt Village to inspect parking on Stevenson Place with Bronx Department of Transportation Commissioner Moran, and a representative from the NYC Fire Department. After this meeting, I convinced the DOT to allow parking on the east side of Stevenson Place between the bend on Stevenson Place and Sedgwick Avenue, creating eight parking spaces. The addition of parking spaces on Stevenson Place will help address the lack of parking in Van Cortlandt Village.



A big thank you to the students and staff at PS 7 for participating in our annual holiday food drive! Pictured with Assemblyman Dinowitz are Principal Frank Paterson, Tara McMaster, Kelly Links, and some of the hard working students.

REMINDER: The Rent Freeze Program, formerly known as the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), has expanded

The New York State legislature has expanded the SCRIE and DRIE income eligibility from \$29,000 a year to \$50,000 a year. If you qualify, your monthly rent amount will be frozen and the City of New York will give your landlord a property tax credit equal to the amount of your increase. If you would like more information or would like help filling out an initial application, please feel free to call or stop by our office. To be eligible you must be at least 62 years of age, your income must not exceed \$50,000, and your annual rent must be greater than one third of your annual income.

If you would like assistance with applying to the program, or would like to know if you are eligible, please contact our office at (718) 796-5345.



This year's annual "Jam if you Can" canned food drive event at PS 24 was a huge success. Pictured along with the children are Assistant Principal Manny Verdi, PA Co-Presidents Tracy Shelton and Farrah Rubin, Congressman Eliot Engel, State Senator Jeffrey D. Klein, Assemblyman Dinowitz, Principal Dr. Donna Connelly, and Assistant Principal Andrea Feldman.

State Tax Forms Available Now

With April 15th right around the corner, it's tax season! As always our office has the following state tax forms, along with the corresponding instructions:

- **IT201** (Resident Income Tax Return)
- **IT201ATT** (Department of Taxation & Finance Attachment)
- **IT203** (Nonresident & Part-Year Resident Income Tax Return)
- **IT203** (Department of Taxation & Finance Attachment)
- **IT203B** (Nonresident & Part-Year Resident Income Allocation & College Tuition Itemized Deduction Worksheet)
- **IT213** (Claim for Empire State Child Credit)
- **IT214** (Claim for Real Property Tax Credit for Homeowners and Renters)
- **IT215** (Claim for Earned Income Credit)
- **IT272** (Claim for College Tuition Credit or Itemized Deduction for Full-year NYS Residents Only)

DOT Installs Dinowitz-Requested New Speed Limit Signage Near PS 81

As of last fall the speed limit on ALL NEW YORK CITY STREETS was reduced to 25 mph unless otherwise posted. The reduced speed limit is an integral part of Mayor de Blasio's comprehensive Vision Zero Action Plan, and will be enforced by the NYPD. On average, a New Yorker is killed or seriously injured every two hours in a traffic crash. Moreover, a pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling at 25 mph is half as likely to die as a pedestrian who is struck by a 30 mph vehicle. Reducing the speed limit in New York will make our streets safer not only for pedestrians, but for motorists as well.

I am pleased to announce that the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) has replaced outdated '30 mph' speed limit signs outside of PS 81 and along Riverdale Avenue with new '25 mph' signs, at my request. The outdated '30 mph' signs remained posted months after the city lowered its default speed limit to 25 mph, and they allowed cars to travel faster in front of the school than they could on nearby streets, endangering the lives of students and other pedestrians in the area. The new '25 mph' speed limit signs will remind drivers that driving slower saves lives and I would like to thank the DOT for responding to my concerns about these outdated signs.



Congratulations to the students of SAR Academy for their hard work and fundraising efforts with Cablevision! The students secured 500 dollars for their school, as well as 1,000 dollars for The Children's Hospital at Montefiore through Optimum Community's "Charity of Champions" program. Pictured are Kristen Thurber from Cablevision, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Director of the Child Life Program at Montefiore Meghan Kelly, SAR High School Student adviser Ora Meier, and many of the wonderful students who took part in the program.



Assemblyman Dinowitz is pictured here with Sorah Shemtov, Rabbi Levi Shemtov, Hadassah Lieberman, former U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, and Council Member Andrew Cohen.

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 and Attorney General Schneiderman Warn Consumers

As Chair of the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Protection, I stood with Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, and NYC Consumer Affairs Commissioner Julie Menin, to highlight the importance of public health and safety when buying toys that can contain hazardous materials. At the press conference I stated, "Retailers have an important responsibility to ensure that the products they sell are safe for children." I also cautioned consumers that they should be wary of scams that take advantage of unwitting consumers in the midst of the holiday season.