

Assemblymember
Tony Simone



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Dear Friends,

I hope all is well with you and your family.

Budget negotiations are coming to a close and I joined my colleagues throughout the process in fighting hard to protect tenants, increase the minimum wage, expand reproductive rights and to ensure we make significant investments in education, healthcare, the environment, transportation, housing and public safety. Stay tuned for details on our final budget agreement.

My community office is always here to help you. My team can be contacted at 212-807-7900 or by emailing SimoneT@nyassembly.gov.

Tony

Protecting Our Streets

Earlier this month, Hell's Kitchen experienced a shooting that thankfully resulted in no injuries. Gun violence on our streets is unacceptable and I am working with my colleagues in government, and the community to assist our local NYPD precinct.

Violent incidents such as these are why I'm fighting for over \$110 million in gun violence funding in the state budget, including \$25 million for crime stabilization units which tackle illegal gun shipments and assist police with crime surges, and \$18 million for crime analysis centers. Perpetrators of violence must always be held fully accountable and I'm thankful for the efforts of the NYPD in investigating this shooting and other incident in the neighborhood.

Op-ed: We Must Pass Right to Counsel

I recently had an op-ed in the [Gotham Gazette](#) about the importance of ensuring tenants have legal assistance when being brought to court by their landlord.

I was a teenager in the 1980s when I learned firsthand what it meant to face eviction and landlord harassment. Three different landlords, but they all used the same playbook: they failed to provide adequate heat, thinking they could take advantage of my family's difficult economic situation. My family fought back against our third landlord and while we weren't able to afford a lawyer, our landlord had multiple. We lost our case, and we were forced to move like so many New Yorkers who attempt to assert their rights every year without legal assistance.

This experience drives my belief in the absolute need for a comprehensive, universal right to counsel for New Yorkers facing eviction. No one should face eviction without counsel in any form or venue – whether it be in a lawsuit brought by a landlord, neglect of repairs, a subsidy termination or an illegal lockout. With 92,000 homeless New Yorkers and the harms of eviction well-documented, the stakes are too high for us not to ensure that tenants have a fighting chance.

The Statewide Right to Counsel (bill [A.1493/S.2721](#)) would remedy this with the guarantee of a free attorney for all New Yorkers in all types of court cases that could result in displacement. The state must act this year to pass and fund Right to Counsel through the budget, to help tenants fight to stay in their homes.

[Read my full op-ed in the Gotham Gazette here.](#)

Keeping Medical Abortion (Mifepristone) Accessible and Available

The attack on reproductive rights by conservative legislators and judges around the country was moved farther into the extreme by a recent ruling in Texas by a Trump appointed right wing judge. Mifepristone is a safe drug that has been used for reproductive health for more than twenty years, and this judge's decision to suspend its FDA approval threw millions into uncertainty and fear as access to abortion continues to be restricted. This politically driven decision is another attempt to use conservative controlled courts to restrict health care, putting more lives at risk.

New York will always remain a state where abortion is accessible, but we must go one step further to build capacity for the people who travel here from states where they cannot get the healthcare they need. To that end, I'm proud to join my colleague Assemblymember Gonzalez-Rojas as a co-sponsor on the [Reproductive Freedom and Equity Act](#). I also joined almost 600 fellow state legislators from around the country in a letter decrying this decision and making clear that abortion is health care and a human right. [Read the full letter here.](#) Governor Hochul has repeatedly expressed her commitment to protect access to medical abortion and has ordered the purchase of a five-year supply.

My New Legislation Helping Student Loan Borrowers

There are 2.5 million New Yorkers with student loan debt who collectively owe almost \$100 billion. To help ease the burden of student loans, I introduced legislation with State Senator Nathalia Fernandez, [A.6109](#), to establish a state level student loan interest deduction for middle income filers, both single and joint, who currently are unable to benefit from the federal deduction. Relieving the burden faced by student loan borrowers helps lift us all and will bring immediate economic benefits.

Protecting Climate Change Regulations

Methane is responsible for more than 25% of global warming, trapping more heat in the atmosphere per molecule than carbon dioxide and making it 80 times more harmful than CO2 for 20 years after it is released.

I joined with colleagues this month to defeat an attempt by the oil and gas lobby to revert the tracking of methane emissions from 20 years back to a 100-year period. Until recently, New York tracked the effects of methane emissions over a 100-year period, just like the federal government. However, after recent research showed that the effects of methane emissions require tracking over a much shorter period of 20 years, New York implemented a new 20-year time frame.

New York must be more aggressive on every level to combat climate change and I am proud to have helped defeat this industry assault on our environment.

Assembly Passes the Birds and Bees Protection Act

The Assembly has passed the Birds and Bees Protection Act to restrict the use of neonicotinoid pesticides ([A.3226, Glick](#)). This widely used pesticide is toxic for birds, bees and other pollinating insects as well as people. It has been banned in Europe since 2018.

The BBPA prohibits the use of certain neonicotinoid insecticides as seed treatments on corn, soy, and wheat grown in New York and would also prohibit certain uses on turf and ornamental plants. It would also require the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry to identify practicable and feasible alternatives to the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Earth Day Cleanups

From Chelsea to Hell's Kitchen, our district came together for Earth Day. I joined residents of Penn South, the W400 Block Association and the Hell's Kitchen Litter Legion for cleanups, flower planting and lessons on how to keep our Earth clean.



With the Hell's Kitchen Litter Legion for an Earth Day cleanup.

Rent Guideline Board Vote Coming Soon: Make Your Voice Heard!

The NYC Rent Guidelines Board is [preparing to take a vote](#) on how much landlords will be able to charge for rent-stabilized apartments. Our city is facing an affordability crisis and there is a danger of the board voting to allow rents to rise by amounts unheard of in years.

The RGB will have a preliminary vote on Tuesday, May 2, 2023, and the public meeting for testifying is not yet posted. I encourage all who will be affected to use your voice and let the board know what you think. I will be testifying at the public meeting in June.

- [Find out when](#) meetings and hearings will take place.
- Submit written testimony [by mail](#) or through this [online form](#).
- [Testify in person](#) to the board.

Support for EPA's proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulations

As a member of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, I have joined my colleagues around the country in submitting comments to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in support of its proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulations for PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). The EPA's proposal would set strong, scientifically supported national drinking water standards for six PFAS and is an important step toward fulfilling the Biden Administration's commitment to tackle these toxic forever chemicals. We commend EPA's recognition that both individual PFAS and chemical mixtures of PFAS can threaten human health.

The EPA's proposal for six PFAS would set the national standard for PFOA and PFOS at the lowest detection level approved by the Agency and would establish limits on other chemicals using a hazard index. It is astounding that the EPA estimates that the drinking water of 94 million people is contaminated by one or more of these PFAS chemicals at levels above the limits proposed by EPA.

The deadline for comments for the proposed rule is May 30. There will be a public hearing on May 4, 2023. See [this link in the federal register](#) for more information.

New Protections for New Yorkers Affected by Lead-Based Paint

Lead poisoning leads to a multitude of issues that can detrimentally impact a person throughout their lifetime. The most common cause of lead poisoning in children is the ingestion of lead paint from poorly maintained residential housing units.

Last week, the Assembly passed legislation to protect renters in New York who are exposed to lead-based paint by prohibiting the exclusion of coverage for losses or damages by exposure to lead-based paint from liability coverage provided to rental property owners ([A.1687, Rivera](#)).

SUNY College of Optometry Offering Free Eye Exams

Take advantage of free vision screenings offered by the SUNY College of Optometry! These are offered every month and the next one will be held on Tuesday, May 9th. Call (888)-601-8811 for more information.

Easter Weekend With Local Block and Tenant Associations

The HK 45/46 Block Association and Manhattan Plaza Tenants Association put together terrific events on April 8 for Easter with Easter Egg Hunts, family activities and fun refreshments. I had a wonderful time celebrating with them!



Easter egg hunt at Clement Clarke Moore Park.

Thank you!

Assemblymember Tony Simone

