

Assemblymember  
**Tony Simone**

Assembly District 75



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Dear Friends,

I hope you've been enjoying your summer and keeping cool in this warm weather. I am very happy to be back in the district full time after the legislative session. Read below to see what I've been up to!

As always, my team is here to help you in any way we can. My Community Office is at 214 West 29th Street. You may also call or email us at 212-807-7900 or [Simonet@nyassembly.gov](mailto:Simonet@nyassembly.gov). **Please contact us if you're having a problem** with a government agency, your landlord, a utility, or if you have concerns about the neighborhood. We can help you.

If your block association or another group needs my help or would like me to come to a meeting, please call or email. And, to help me legislate most effectively, **it's important for me to hear from you, so never hesitate to voice your opinion on legislation.**

- Tony

### **Heat Advisory Today**

Beginning today, July 27th, New York City is issuing a heat advisory that will be in effect through Saturday, July 29th. As a result, the city's Cooling Centers will be opened. [You can search here](#) to find the cooling center in your area. Limit your time outdoors, and if you must go out, be sure to hydrate. Pets and children should also be kept inside as much as possible to avoid any heat related illnesses.

Extreme heat impacts all New Yorkers, but is especially difficult for seniors, sensitive groups, and those with health conditions. Check on your neighbors and call 911 if you see an emergency.

### **Protecting Retirees Healthcare**

Two years ago the City of New York negotiated with city unions to take away traditional Medicare from public employee retirees and force them to enter a for-profit health network, a Medicare Advantage plan. This plan affects over 250,000 retired city workers.

On July 7, the Manhattan Supreme Court granted a preliminary injunction stopping the city from making the switch. I am strongly against any diminishing of healthcare for retirees who earned their benefits through a career of service to their city. I am proud to co-sponsor the Health Equity for Retirees Act, [A.7866](#) in the Assembly, by my colleague Assemblymember Ken Zebrowski. This bill will prohibit public employers from diminishing health insurance benefits provided to retirees and their dependents. This bill will ensure retirees will not be at risk of reduced access to care, long pre-authorization waits, and needing to switch providers they have long relied on for care.

The fight to protect Medicare from being chipped away by privatization, and the fight to protect city employee retirees is part of the fight to win comprehensive and affordable healthcare for all.

### **Penn Station Updates**

The decisions being made about the future of Penn Station will be with us for the next century. I recently joined Governor Hochul for an announcement that the refurbishment of Penn will no longer be reliant on the development of new commercial towers on the blocks surrounding the station. This change sets up a process to hear proposals on how to create an iconic new station while the federal government decides the best way to move forward on the question of how best to connect the coming new gateway tunnels to the station. New proposals for designs will now be accepted. Architects and engineers will be able to compete for an opportunity to redesign the western hemisphere's busiest train hub!

I also joined Manhattan Community Board 5 for a presentation of one of the rebuild plans, from developer ASTM. From a grand entrance on 8th Avenue, to a large light filled space rather than long underground corridors, to an architectural design that bridges the station's past and future, the ideas represented by this plan point the way forward to a station that fulfills its mission and restores some of the grandiosity lost with the demolition of the original Penn Station.



### **Rejecting the renewal of Madison Square Garden's Special Permit**

Madison Square Garden has a special operating permit, yet it is well known that at this location, it is an impediment to improving Penn Station. State Senators Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Liz Krueger, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine and I testified at a New York City Council hearing to call on the Council to reject the permit or if the permit is extended, to keep it to three years maximum and mandate that MSG cooperate with any Penn reconstruction plan. For too long, Penn has been allowed to fall apart while MSG rakes in profits.



### **The Battle with Illegal Cannabis Shops**

There are over 75 illegal weed shops in the 75th District alone, and that number is ever growing. The community has been very active in trying to control the problem and I am working with the Office of Cannabis Management and the local community to bring new state enforcement that I voted for in this year's budget to shut down the illegal cannabis shops.

We know one illegal activity breeds others. I spoke about this issue at the ribbon cutting for the new Play Streets at McCaffery Park, sponsored by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. This play street will help build community connections while improving the health and safety of our kids and our community. When school is out over the summer, it's so important that kids have somewhere they can spend time that is safe, with activities and games that they can enjoy. This is how we combat drugs in a proactive way: by investing in the quality of kids' lives and building community.



## Pride in NYC

Marching this year in the New York City Pride Parade was very special to me because it was the first time I was marching as an elected official. My election was historic, since I'm the first openly gay Latino member of the Assembly for a district that includes the largest queer population in New York State and some of the most well-known gay neighborhoods in the country. The opportunity to march with my husband, friends and colleagues as a representative of that community made me feel very proud, and I couldn't be more grateful.



## Transgender Safe Haven Bill Signed into Law

Across the country, trans kids as well as their families and doctors are being targeted by hateful and discriminatory legislatures. New York State is the birthplace of the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement and has always been a safe place where queer people can live and thrive.

During the New York City Pride March, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law the Trans Safe Haven Bill, which protects access to gender-affirming healthcare for trans minors who come to New York seeking such care. While other states across the nation pass draconian laws that irreparably harm vulnerable communities, New York State is boldly claiming that we will protect the LGBTQ+ community and stand up for the rights of all people. I appreciate Governor Hochul and my colleagues, Assemblymember Harry Bronson and (my) State Senator Hoylman-Sigal for their leadership.



## **Congestion Pricing**

Traffic congestion in our neighborhoods has long had one of the largest negative impacts on our quality of life, particularly for those near the Lincoln Tunnel. The policy passed a final hurdle in June when the federal government determined that congestion pricing would have no significant impact on the environment, allowing it to move forward.

It is expected that congestion pricing will take effect in the spring of 2024. While the exact prices of the tolls have not yet been determined, I am glad that this policy will make a large investment in our public transit system and help the MTA make long overdue improvements to the subway, while making the streets easier to navigate for emergency vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians. The current law exempts residents making under \$60,000 a year and I support new legislation that would exempt residents making under \$100,000 a year. [My full testimony on the congestion pricing program can be read here.](#)

## **Find Tony on your corner!**

Find me in the district this summer! I have been meeting neighbors all over Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, and soon I'll be in a spot near you!



*The Fulton Houses Family Day is always a great opportunity to make community connections and enjoy the summer!*



*An afternoon in the Manhattan Plaza lobby is one of the best ways to hear from residents (and their pets!)*

### **Monkeypox Updates**

While Monkeypox cases currently remain low, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Health recommends those at highest risk receive two doses of the vaccine.

[Find out where here](#) and learn more at [www.nyc.gov/mpox](http://www.nyc.gov/mpox).

## Protect Yourself and Others From Mpox



### Get your two-dose mpox (monkeypox) vaccine.

It is never too late to get the second dose.

To find a vaccination site, visit

[nyc.gov/vaccinefinder](https://nyc.gov/vaccinefinder).



### Do not have sex or other intimate contact if you or your partners have a new rash or sores, feel sick, or were recently exposed to mpox.

Ask your partners whether they have mpox symptoms and about their recent sexual history.



### Frequently wash your hands, bedding, towels and other shared items. Sex toys should be washed after each use.



### Talk to your health care provider about testing, pain management and treatment if you have symptoms you think could be mpox.

If you do not have a provider, call **311** to get connected to care.

For more information, visit [nyc.gov/mpox](https://nyc.gov/mpox) or scan the QR code.



5.23

## New Tenant Helpline

Whether it be landlord harassment or needed repairs, tenants often need advice when dealing with their landlord. Tenants can now call the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit's helpline with issues about paying rent to questions about leases, harassment and lockouts, and evictions. Because tenants who call the helpline are frequently experiencing a range of interrelated hardships, the Helpline has expanded to serve callers more holistically by connecting them with additional City programs like SNAP, Cash Assistance, Homebase, One-Shot Deals, and helping them apply for State programs like rent relief and unemployment insurance. The hotline can be reached by **calling 311 and asking for the tenant helpline.**

## National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials & the Affordable Housing Crisis

The largest gathering of Latino political leaders in the country came to New York City for the first time with the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) conference. It was a great week of gathering with my colleagues around the country to discuss the most pressing issues facing us today and how the Latino community can take action to tackle them. This organization shows that the political power of Latino communities is vital to solving problems and supporting our communities. I was proud to spend the week with my fabulous Latino colleagues in the state legislature, especially State Senators Gustavo Rivera and Jessica Ramos, as well as Assemblymembers Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Kenny Burgos, and Catalina Cruz.

I joined conversations on a variety of issues, particularly one that New Yorkers know well: a nationwide lack of affordable housing. While we agree the federal government should spend billions on large-scale projects to address this crisis, this is not likely to happen, and the responsibility falls to state and local governments. Negotiations thus far have shown that to spur healthy growth, we have to take on zoning challenges, particularly in the suburbs; strengthen protections for tenants, and employ other creative methods. As the Assemblymember representing midtown, I am convinced that with the right tools and a community-led effort like that put forth by Community Board 4, we can do our part to address the affordable housing crisis.



*With Assemblymembers Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas and Catalina Cruz at the NALEO Conference*

### **Upcoming Community Events & Resources**

The Lincoln Square BID offers a Summer Jazz Sensations concert series at Dante Park (Broadway and 64th Street) every Wednesday from June 21st through August 30th, 2023, from noon to 1:30pm. [Find the lineup here!](#)

On August 17th, the High Line will host ¡Arriba! For this intergenerational public event, the High Line transforms from a park to an open-air dance floor where New Yorkers and visitors come together to enjoy the sounds of local salsa legends and learn dance moves from the masters. [Use this link to RSVP.](#)

The High Line also hosts [events and provides programming for kids and families!](#) This Saturday, July 29th, the High Line will host the Fantastic Forests workshop, where families can explore the role native trees play in New York City's unique ecosystem. Teaching artists from the New Victory Theater will join to engage visitors in a movement-based workshop inspired by trees. [RSVP here!](#)

The Red Cross provides many resources and programming to the community to prevent disasters. You can sign up to take a course in topics like home fire safety, creating home emergency kits. [Sign up for a course today!](#)