



Assemblymember
Jo Anne Simon

52nd District



Announcements & Upcoming Events

March 2019

A Message from Jo Anne...

As we **celebrate Women's History Month** and the progress we've made, we renew our commitment to working for full equality. We pay tribute to the women who pushed back against discrimination and shattered glass ceilings to forge brighter paths for us all. From one movement to the next, they refused to be silenced.

Thanks to fearless New Yorkers, like suffragette Susan B. Anthony and abolitionist Sojourner Truth, we've come a long way since our nation's founding. We also take inspiration from Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY in 1848, after they were turned away from the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention because they were women. Muckraking journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett wrote articles exposing post-slavery racism and lynching. At a time when talking about birth control was considered absurd and obscene, Margaret Sanger broke the mold by opening the nation's first family planning center in Brooklyn in 1916, which resulted in her imprisonment. The courage that these women possessed has inspired other trailblazers to continue their fight, including disability rights advocate Judith Heumann, who helped develop the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The #MeToo movement, created by Tarana Burke, director of the Brooklyn-based nonprofit Girls for Gender Equity, has brought attention to sexual assault and harassment issues that have plagued our nation for far too long. Recently, the remarkable women who founded the Sexual Harassment Working Group pushed for the first New York State legislative hearing on sexual harassment in decades (go to my website to listen to the hearing).

Although undeniable progress has been made, we have much to do to reach full equality. As more women are running for office to ensure the fight for equality continues, the Assembly Majority is also committed to continuing the movement that began in Seneca Falls long ago. We're fighting to close the gender pay gap; we made paid family leave a reality so that women do not have to choose between caring for a loved one and a paycheck; and after years of fighting for the Reproductive Health Act (RHA), it has finally become law – so that a woman's constitutional right to choose is always protected in New York State (more on the RHA below).

Want to learn more about New York trailblazers like Shirley Chisholm & Sonia Sotomayor? Email simonj@nyassembly.gov or go to my website to request my materials for youth, including a Women's History Month brochure, activity pamphlet, and a Women's History Month Drawing Contest brochure.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne Simon

Historic Women's Rights Bills are Passed: I am thrilled to announce that I helped pass three critical bills to protect women's rights this session: the Reproductive Health Act (RHA) affirms a woman's right to choose in New York State; the Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act requires insurers to continue covering contraception at no cost to the consumer; and the Boss Bill prohibits discrimination against employees based on reproductive health choices ([A.21](#), [A.585-A](#), [A.584](#)). For years, the Assembly has passed reproductive rights

legislation in the ongoing fight for full women's equality only to have the measures rejected by the state Senate. But the new Senate leadership also recognizes that reproductive rights are human rights and are essential to a woman's health, safety, opportunity and economic security, and they have also passed the bills.

The RHA bill updates our antiquated abortion laws and codifies the constitutional protections of *Roe v. Wade* into state law. New York State was a pioneer in women's rights and passed our reproductive rights law with bipartisan support in 1970 three years before *Roe* was decided in 1973; *Roe* was actually based on New York State law, but now our law is nearly 50 years old and outdated. RHA updates our laws by legislating abortion through the health code (instead of the penal code) where it belongs, because abortion care is health care. The bill authorizes duly licensed health care practitioners to terminate a pregnancy within 24 weeks, when there is an absence of fetal viability or when a woman's life or health is endangered. By passing this legislation again, the Assembly is preemptively fighting back against the alarming possibility of *Roe* being overturned. To learn more, go to www.TalkLikeAPro.com and hear from patient advocates like Erika and Garin from RHAVote.com who had to leave NY to get the reproductive health care they needed under our old laws.

Forum on the Reproductive Health Act, 3/14/19, 7pm, Park Slope. Women's Health and Reproductive Rights (WHARR) and others are hosting a forum on RHA: Separating Fact from Fiction, on Thurs., March 14th, 7-9pm at Camp Friendship (339 8th St, Brooklyn). They will review the RHA and host a panel of experts, including physicians and patient advocates. I was pleased to meet again with WHARR recently to discuss a variety of topics including the RHA, the need to better inform patients about crisis pregnancy centers, aka fake clinics, and efforts to reduce maternal mortality. Learn more about this Brooklyn group: <https://www.wharr.com>.

Dyslexia Awareness Day in Albany, 3/14/2019. Join us for the 4th Annual Dyslexia Awareness Day at the NYS Capitol! This event brings together students, parents, advocates, and experts from across the state. You will network with others and meet with legislators to share your experiences. The event will feature a panel of people with dyslexia, guest speakers, and review dyslexia legislation and funding needs. We will also have special guest speakers, NYS Division of Human Rights Commissioner Helen Foster, Assemblymember Robert Carroll, & Senator John Brooks. To RSVP, email simonj@nyassembly.gov or call 718-246-4889.

Fighting Trump's Gag Rule on Reproductive Health Care: I joined Planned Parenthood and others to publicly reject the Trump-Pence Administration's rule change to the Title X Family Planning Program. This is a brazen attempt to defund Planned Parenthood, but will prevent New Yorkers from getting a host of health care services from these clinics. Title X funding has provided reproductive health care to people across the country for more than 40 years, and it provides services to over 300,000 New Yorkers every year. The new rule bans Title X recipients from performing abortions and providing abortion referrals, which creates a "domestic gag rule" intended to defund Planned Parenthood and other Title X clinics. These facilities also provide basic health care like contraceptives and screening for diabetes, anemia, high blood pressure, STDs, cervical and breast cancer, and more. This administration needs to focus on enhancing access to real medical care, not thwarting it. Several groups, including NYS Attorney General Letitia James, are fighting the rule in the courts.



Expanding Anti-Discrimination Laws. I am pleased to have helped pass anti-discrimination legislation, including a measure expanding New York's sexual

harassment laws to help ensure no one feels threatened or unsafe in the workplace. While last year's budget included important sexual harassment statutes, this legislation would expand and clarify these protections. The bill would establish a model policy and model training program to prevent discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, military status, familial status, marital status, predisposing genetic characteristics or domestic violence victim status ([A.5976](#)). The legislation would also:

- clarify that all employers are subject to state anti-discrimination laws;
- prohibit mandatory arbitration clauses related to workplace discrimination;
- require companies involved in a competitive public bidding process to have a written policy on discrimination prevention;
- authorize the state attorney general to bring a civil action or prosecute cases of discrimination; and
- expand discrimination protections to non-employees, like contractors, vendors or consultants.

We also passed a measure to extend anti-discrimination protections of the state's Human Rights Law to all public schools ([A.3425](#)). To expand protections and help make full women's equality a reality, the Assembly once again passed A.271, an amendment to the state constitution to guarantee equal protection to persons on the basis of sex (the NYS Constitution currently only protects against discrimination based on race, color, creed or religion). To ensure religious adherents are treated equally and fairly in the workplace, the Assembly passed a bill prohibiting employment discrimination against religious attire, including facial hair ([A.4204](#)). In addition, I helped pass legislation to clarify that lactation is a pregnancy-related condition and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations in the workplace ([A.5975](#)).

BQE Reconstruction Update: New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) recently shared a [brief update](#) on the environmental review process for this project, detailing where they are in the process and a tentative project timeline. NYCDOT said that the project is still in its early stages of development, recognized that the two construction concepts they presented last fall have raised significant community concerns, and conveyed that they are exploring other concepts, including options that utilize portions of Brooklyn Bridge Park (like the Brooklyn Heights Association's proposal). NYCDOT also clarified that they have not yet begun the federal environmental review process, but they anticipate it to begin later in 2019 and to last about two years.

NYCDOT is currently conducting small group meetings with stakeholders along the impacted corridor. Those meetings are part of pre-scoping, when NYCDOT will collect community feedback and prepare to begin the environmental process, after which they will issue a Notice of Intent and hold a public scoping meeting, followed by a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), feedback on the DEIS, and a final EIS. My office, along with the other local elected officials, is committed to attend as many of these meetings as possible.

I am also dedicated to seeing that all feasible construction options are explored before NYCDOT determines the approach. I was pleased to see in the NY Times that NYCDOT is anticipating 4-6 options, and NYCDOT has reiterated that they will have multiple options for construction in their recent correspondence and in their recent small group meeting with CB2 and CB6. **I am still working to bring State DOT and its technical expertise back to the table for this project.** To that end, I have met with the State DOT Commissioner and I have also met with Governor Cuomo's budget director, among others. **I will also continue to urge NYCDOT to engage with the community more regularly and increase the frequency and robustness of the communications on this project.**

I am also still working with my colleagues in Albany on the critical fight to ensure legislation for congestion pricing is in the final budget at the end of this month. The fight for congestion pricing has been and will continue to be an uphill battle, but the benefits our city would reap make it clear that congestion pricing must be part of a holistic approach to our transportation policy. Creating toll equity across the metropolitan area

would disincentivize gratuitous travel through our district on the way to the East River bridges, and could decrease traffic on the BQE, potentially making the BQE repairs less impactful on Brooklyn Heights and the surrounding neighborhoods, and could provide funding to help us repair our ailing subway system.

For details on the small group meetings or to sign up for the NYCDOT emails, contact them at 332-999-4520, email info@bqe-i278.com, or visit their [BQE website](#). Please contact my office to discuss this issue further and we will continue to provide updates on this project.

Drivers' Licenses for All New Yorkers: I'm proud to support [A3675](#), which restores driving privileges for all residents of New York, including undocumented immigrants, and protects the data of applicants from unwarranted release. By expanding driver education and licensing to more New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, our streets will be safer and drivers will be held accountable. Across the state, and especially upstate, there are hundreds of thousands of people with no ability to get a license, and no way to get to their jobs, schools, and doctor's appointments without breaking the law or spending exorbitant money on travel. This legislation will also increase our state revenues from licensing and registration taxes and fees, as well as lowering car insurance premiums for New Yorkers.

New York State offers 3 options when getting a driver license, permit, or non-driver ID: **Enhanced, REAL ID, and Standard**. An Enhanced ID can be used to board a domestic flight, enter federal buildings and military bases, cross a US border coming from Canada, Mexico, and some Caribbean countries, and for photo identification. Enhanced IDs are [federal REAL ID](#) compliant and require proof of identity, NY State residency, US citizenship, date of birth, and Social Security status. A REAL ID can be used to board a domestic flight, enter federal buildings and military bases, and for photo identification. REAL IDs are federal REAL ID compliant and require proof of identity, NY State residency, lawful presence in the US, and Social Security status. A standard ID can be used to board a domestic flight **only until Oct. 1, 2020**, and for photo identification. Standard ID's are **not** federal REAL ID compliant.

This legislation would give applicants for the standard license the option of signing an affidavit stating that they have not been issued a Social Security number. This legislation will not affect commercial licenses class A, B, or C, nor licenses for for-hire vehicles and standard licenses would not be REAL ID compliant, meaning they would have limited uses. Application forms will not be public records and will not be disclosed absent a subpoena or warrant, protecting all New Yorkers.

Pre-K for All Applications – Due 3/15/2019: Every NYC child can start their education with Pre-K for All. Apply online at [MySchools.nyc](#) or [nyc.gov/prek](#), by phone at 718-935-2009, or at a Family Welcome Center. For more info, contact the Pre-K for All Outreach Team at 212-637-8000 or pre-k@schools.nyc.gov.

For community and policy updates, sign up for my email alerts by emailing simonj@nysassembly.gov

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