



News

from
Assemblymember
**LINDA B.
ROSENTHAL**

December 2011

DISTRICT OFFICE: 230 West 72nd Street, Suite 2F, New York, NY 10023 • 212-873-6368 • rosenthall@assembly.state.ny.us

NEW FREE NOTARY SERVICE AT MY OFFICE ON FRIDAYS 1 – 4 P.M.

Dear Neighbor,

After an arduous session in Albany, it was a pleasure to be back in the district this summer. The 2011 legislative session was marked by a number of accomplishments, including passing an on-time budget, saving senior centers from closure, expanding the Green Jobs-Green New York program as well as enacting significant ethics reform. After voting in favor of same-sex marriage for four years, this year I had the honor of taking part in a vote that made New York the sixth and largest state to permit same-sex couples to marry. And finally, we strengthened the rent regulations for the first time since 1993, ensuring that two million rent-regulated tenants will be able to stay in their homes.

With session fast approaching, we must seize that momentum and move forward toward greater successes. I rely on all of you to share your thoughts and ideas with me. We must work together to develop responsive legislative policy, common-sense solutions to pressing district concerns and an even stronger, more vibrant community on the Upper West Side. As always, I will continue to work to protect tenants against harassment, to create safe streets for seniors and all pedestrians and to seize opportunities for economic growth and revitalization.

Please feel free to drop by the office for help with any problems, with suggestions to improve the neighborhood or to just say hello.

Sincerely,


Linda B. Rosenthal

The Expansion of Rent Regulations and What That Means for You

An emotionally charged and hard-fought battle to renew and strengthen the rent regulations for the City, heightened by the need for repeated extension votes when the law's expiration date of June 15 passed without a bill, came to an end when the Legislature reached an agreement that adds some new protections for rent-regulated tenants. For the first time since 1993, the New York State Legislature voted to strengthen and not merely extend the rent regulations, which currently protect more than two million New Yorkers. As thousands of apartments are decontrolled each year, without any significant oversight by New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), New Yorkers are facing a serious shortage of affordable housing options.



Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal addresses the crowd at a rally in favor of increased tenant protections.

After holding many meetings over many months with tenant advocates, constituents, colleagues and the Governor, I am glad to report that we did extend the laws until June 23, 2015 and strengthen them. The new law:

- Raises the vacancy decontrol rate from \$2,000 to \$2,500;
- Increases the high-rent decontrol threshold from \$175,000 to \$200,000;
- Allows landlords to pass down 1/60th of the cost of a new renovation to the tenant, thereby making it more difficult to reach the vacancy decontrol threshold through renovations. Landlords owning buildings with less than 35 units will still be able to charge 1/40th of the cost of the renovation to the tenant;
- Allows landlords to collect an automatic vacancy bonus only once per year (not every time) when an apartment becomes vacant;
- Empowers HCR to promulgate rules and regulations to implement and enforce the act; and
- Expires June 23, 2015.

As you know, I have always been a fierce advocate of passing the strongest possible tenant protections. The original bill that passed in the Assembly, which included legislation I sponsored, would have ended vacancy decontrol, a system that is designed to end rent regulation and allows unscrupulous landlords to decontrol units that should remain in the system. Though vacancy decontrol as we know it still exists, the improvements we won are substantial and but one step in the ongoing battle to achieve stronger protections for tenants. This district is home to many thousands of rent-regulated tenants, so you can be sure that I will continue this fight.

COMMUNITY CORNER: SPOTLIGHT ON THE ISSUES

The Fight to Rid our Schools of Toxic PCBs

In response to pressure generated by legislation I introduced in the Assembly and my repeated demands along with those of parents, advocates and other elected officials to require the City Department of Education (DOE) to remove lighting ballasts and fixtures laden with toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) present in New York City public school buildings, the City put forth a ten-year plan for PCB lighting removal. While the City's acceding to a plan to remove the lighting was a positive step, the ten-year timeline is not acceptable.

PCBs are neurotoxins and endocrine disrupters that cause developmental and cognitive disabilities and are suspected human carcinogens. New research suggests that PCBs are particularly dangerous for pregnant women and any woman or girl of child-bearing age. The risks associated with PCB exposure are cumulative, and long-term exposure increases these risks exponentially.

It is incumbent upon the City to protect the health and safety of children, teachers and staff in schools; it is an egregious dereliction of duty to allow ten years to pass without cleaning up each and every school building.

I will continue my quest to rid our schools of PCBs. If you wish to get involved, please contact my office at 212-873-6368 or rosenhall@assembly.state.ny.us. It will take the voices of many New Yorkers demanding immediate action to force the City to remediate all affected school buildings within a reasonable time frame.

Rosenthal Gets West 72nd Street Duane Reade to Remove Jumbotron at Dangerous Bowtie Site

Anticipating the strong objections that Upper West Siders would have to the jumbotron installed by Duane Reade at its new store at the corner of West 72nd Street and Broadway, I immediately jumped into action. While community members



Assemblymember Rosenthal, flanked by Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer and a crowd of concerned community members, at a news conference in July demanding that the DOT begin work on the long-overdue safety redesign of the intersection of West 71 Street and Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue.

organized an effective public campaign to have the sign removed, I began a dialogue with Walgreens executives, Duane Reade's parent company, that ended with a high-level meeting at my district office between Walgreens executives and area elected officials. Following the meeting, Duane Reade promptly agreed to permanently remove the sign and relocate it to a more appropriate location. This was a great victory for the Upper West Side in preserving the charming character that makes this neighborhood unique to the City. I will continue to work alongside community members to ensure that this neighborhood remains a great place to live and work.

No School in Dangerous Construction Zone P.S. 51 Students to Get New Temporary Home

The students at P.S. 51, the Elias Howe School, got a new home in September. The school, formerly located at 520 West 45 Street, has temporarily moved to a new location on the Upper East Side for the next two years while construction of ten new buildings and a new P.S. 51 school building takes place around the site of the old school. Students and their parents, fearing the disruption that would be caused by the construction and the potential for harmful chemicals to be released during the excavation process, reached out to my office for help. After seeing test results that indicated contaminants in areas frequented by the children, teachers and staff, I immediately called for relocation of the school. The Department of Education reluctantly agreed after facing angry outcries, and the parents and I are much relieved by the relocation. It is just common sense that children must not be exposed to dangerous chemicals and disruptive construction, especially during the school year.

Rosenthal Hosts Annual West Side Seniors Day at the American Museum of Natural History

On June 10, 2011, I hosted my annual seniors day at the American Museum of Natural History. The event, which was attended by hundreds of Upper West Side seniors, offered a screening of the IMAX movie *Sea Rex: Journey to a Prehistoric World*, a self-guided tour of the Museum's newest exhibit, *Brain: The Inside Story* and a delicious lunch. This day at the Museum is a favorite for all involved, and I look forward to many future excursions with seniors to one of the West Side's best-loved treasures.

Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Traffic Study Completed

Long-Awaited Safety Improvements Coming to the Area

After intense community pressure, the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) completed its lengthy study, which outlines needed safety improvements. DOT will install protected bike lanes from West 34th to West 59th Streets on 8th and 9th Avenues. In addition, the study recommends adding a crosswalk on the west side of 9th Avenue and West 36th Street, as well as a traffic island and pedestrian plaza that will help green the area. Signal retiming, select bus service and diversion of buses to designated areas will help alleviate traffic. If you have any suggestions for improvements or questions, please contact me at 212-873-6368 or rosenhall@assembly.state.ny.us.

Rosenthal Introduces Bill to Protect Student Privacy

With the advent of the Internet and social media, access to personally identifiable, potentially sensitive information is at an all-time high. Advertisers pay top dollar for access to information to better target a specific demographic, and financially shrewd web-based companies sell users' information, oftentimes with impunity.

While most of the Internet-using public is aware that our information is likely being sold and shared, many do not know that schools are also in the business of selling information about their students.

School records contain very sensitive information about our children, and the dissemination of data which allows marketers to ex-

ploit them, all without their parents' consent, must be stopped.

I have introduced bill A8474, which will prevent schools from providing any personally identifiable information about their students by requiring that the school provide parents with notice and an opportunity to opt out of any information-sharing before that sharing occurs.

Protecting our children should be a priority and schools must not be in the business of making money from selling sensitive information. Every parent has a right to prevent the sharing of their children's information and this bill will empower them to do so.



Assemblymember Rosenthal at the Coop/Condo Forum she hosted at B'nai Jeshurun, along with panelists, from left: Marissa Piesman, Assistant Attorney General with the New York State Department of Law; Kevin McConnell of Himmelstein, McConnell, Gribben, Donoghue & Joseph; Bruce Cholst of Rosen, Livingston & Cholst LLP; and Larry Simms, president of the Alliance of Coop and Condo Owners.

Making History with Marriage Equality

I am so proud to have played a role in the historic vote here in New York State legalizing same-sex marriage. After we in the Assembly voted in favor of marriage equality for the fourth time, the New York State Legislature acted to make New York the sixth and largest state in the country to legalize same-sex marriage, and the first to do so via the legislative process. As I said on the Assembly floor just prior to casting my vote in favor of marriage equality, I first got involved in government as a way to help create a better, more just society—and this is one of the clearest examples I can point to of having achieved that. After years of struggle and dogged advocacy, same-sex couples who choose to spend their lives together in a loving and committed relationship will be entitled to the same rights, benefits, and protections that heterosexual married couples have always enjoyed. For information on how to get married in New York State, please visit the Department of Health's website at http://www.health.state.ny.us/vital_records/married.htm or the City's Clerk's website at <http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/faq.shtml>.



Assemblymember Rosenthal stands with marriage equality advocates in Albany on the eve of the historic vote.

Rosenthal Works to Protect Seniors, Students in NYS Budget

Notwithstanding the poor fiscal climate, the New York State Legislature passed an on-time budget last session. Despite the need to make many difficult decisions, we managed to avert some of the most extreme cuts to social services for seniors, students, and some of the most vulnerable populations in New York.

Senior Centers: One of my top priorities during the budget negotiations was to ensure that New York City's senior centers were able to keep their doors open. I fought hard to protect Title XX funding and saved the City from cuts of nearly \$25 million, preventing the closure of 105 senior centers citywide, including three right here in our district – JASA, Hargrave, and Clinton Senior Centers.

Education Funding: Despite proposals to make severe cuts to education that would have had long term consequences on our children's ability to learn and grow, I was able to restore \$230 million in funding, with \$53 million slated for New York City schools, which helped stave off drastic teacher layoffs.



Assemblymember Rosenthal gives a lunchtime address to seniors at Hamilton Senior Center, assuring them that she will make sure that the senior centers stay open.

Rosenthal Introduces Legislation to Ban Horse-Drawn Carriages in New York

As a New York State Assemblymember, it is my job to give the voiceless a voice in New York State, which is one of the many reasons that animal welfare issues are so important to me. Last session, I introduced legislation to ban horse-drawn carriages in New York City. These industry work horses toil for up to nine hours a day with little or no rest in the bitter cold of January and the blazing heat of August. With their heads bowed, these work horses drag thousands of pounds of carriage and passenger in a grinding, nose-to-tailpipe existence.

The congested streets of New York City are no place for carriage horses. Shortly after I introduced my bill, three serious accidents involving horse-drawn carriages and vehicles took place. Horses, carriage operators and passengers were injured, in two cases very seriously. Again during a six-week-span in November and December of this year, three incidents occurred, including the death of a carriage horse named Charlie.

The horse-drawn carriage ride harkens back to a simpler time in New York City, when there were fewer cars, bikes, buses, motorcycles and pedestrians. There is no place for horse-drawn carriages in modern-day New York, as evidenced by the increasing frequency of accidents. The tourist industry in New York City is booming, with thousands of attractions that draw people from around the world. I am confident that removing the carriage horses from their forced labor will not affect the tourist industry one iota.

I will work toward passage of a citywide ban to put New York in line with cities such as London, Paris, and Beijing that have already banned the practice.

Rosenthal Advocates for Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a crime of escalation. In the majority of the most serious cases, abusers have a long history of so-called minor crimes. Over years, a push escalates to a slap to a punch to oftentimes deadly results. However, abusers are only being charged with misdemeanor offenses, many of which carry no jail time.

To address this clear injustice, last session I introduced legislation that would create a new, felony-level crime carrying with it a mandatory minimum four-year prison sentence. People would be guilty of this crime if they commit two or more enumerated misdemeanors against a member of the same family or household within a five-year period of time.

The bill, which passed the Assembly but languished in the Senate, will send a strong message to abusers that they will be punished to the fullest extent of the law. Passage of this legislation will be a priority in the upcoming legislative session.

Empowering Hotel Workers Rosenthal Bill Would Provide Sexual Harassment Prevention Training and Awareness

After several high-profile incidents occurred at New York City hotels, I introduced and passed legislation in the Assembly that would require hotel and motel owners to provide their employees with sexual harassment prevention training and education. The training, to be designed by the New York State Department of Labor in consultation with the hotels and motels, would provide employees with key information about their rights in the event of a sexual assault by a fellow employee or hotel guest, instruct them on what actions to take and would establish a protocol for management to follow when incidents occur. Education is the key to prevention, and recent events demonstrated very clearly that many in the hospitality industry may not know how best to address sexual harassment in the workplace. My legislation will ensure that everyone in the hotel, from the bellhop to the front desk clerk to the guest staying in the penthouse knows what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior.



Assemblymember Rosenthal stands with New York City firefighters at a rally at City Hall. The Mayor had announced that he would close nearly a dozen firehouses to balance the budget. Rosenthal, the firefighters and the rest of the City prevailed, and the firehouses remained open.



Assemblymember Rosenthal addresses the crowd of thousands at a Planned Parenthood rally at Foley Square against proposed cuts to the group's federal funding.

Historic Ethics Bill Signed Into Law

Last year, I signed a pledge promising to continue to fight for meaningful government reform. As I continued my commitment to clean up Albany, I co-sponsored the Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011, which brings greater transparency to both the Legislature and the Executive branch. This Act will help foster accountability by requiring lawmakers to disclose all income from outside employment and the names of clients or customers. Additional disclosures for registered lobbyists and forfeiture of pensions for public officials convicted of a felony will be required. The Act will establish a new Joint Commission on Public Ethics with broad investigative powers. Most lawmakers in Albany are dedicated public servants committed to serving their constituents and the State of New York, but for the bad apple who uses his or her post for personal benefit, these tough new rules will ensure that they are held publicly accountable for their actions.

Rosenthal Introduces Three Bills to Protect Homeowners Against Natural Gas Drilling

I have been a committed and outspoken opponent of fracking in the Marcellus Shale and other regions in New York State. States that have allowed fracking to proceed have paid dearly. From contaminated water and polluted air, to mystery illnesses and possibly even earthquakes, fracking has not been shown to be safe. Despite all this, however, fracking may proceed even in the face of vocal and mounting opposition.

With that in mind, I introduced three bills that will protect homeowners who enter into lease agreements with natural gas companies to drill for gas on their land. The average homeowner is not aware that gas drilling may violate the terms of their mortgage. In addition, banks have stated that they will not back mortgages on properties that are located within 300 feet or less of a fracking well, rendering most fracked properties all but worthless.

Lured by often false promises of big payouts by deep-pocketed gas companies, homeowners may not consider the long-term impacts that these lease agreements may have on their home values. These three bills will protect homeowners by requiring drilling companies to make mandatory disclosures to homeowners and also to give notice to mortgage holders. I will continue to strenuously oppose fracking in New York State, but its proponents are monied and powerful. Placing onerous and costly restrictions on the practice is one way to prevent its expansion.