



News

from
Assemblymember
**LINDA B.
ROSENTHAL**

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Dear Neighbor,

With the holiday season just passed, I am pleased to be able to bring you another newsletter, to provide you with important updates about the work that I have been doing and about some of the more pressing issues in the community. Though I am always happy to spend time in the district with family, friends and neighbors, and to see so many of you at local events, I am ready to get back to Albany to bring about legislative action that will improve the lives of all New Yorkers.

Now that the election season is behind us, we must work to reform our system of financing campaigns. Reducing the influence of special interests in Albany must be a top priority if we are to restore the public's faith in our electoral system. In addition, we must also reform the administration of elections in this state to ensure that all eligible citizens have an opportunity to vote on Election Day. Though Superstorm Sandy posed new and unique challenges on Election Day, many of the problems experienced by voters, unfortunately, were not new. Voting is the most fundamental exercise of democracy in a free society, and the system should have worked better so that people could vote without incident. Reform is desperately needed to guarantee that voting proceeds without obstacles, through improvements such as more streamlined procedures at polling places, easier-to-read ballots and notification of redistricting information, to name a few.

The economy, while improving, still poses challenges, and hard-working New Yorkers continue to struggle to make ends meet through this sluggish recovery. We must increase the minimum wage to ensure that middle-class families earn a fair wage for an honest day's work.

To be sure, the new year will bring with it new challenges, but also new opportunities for growth. I am eager to face those challenges head on and to work hard for all of you. As always, I am interested in your opinions, so please feel to contact me at 212-873-6368 or rosenthal@assembly.state.ny.us.

Sincerely,

Linda B. Rosenthal
Member of Assembly — 67th AD

A Shooting Stuns the Country, Assembly Stands Ready To Take Action on Guns

It has unfortunately taken the massacre of 20 young children and 6 adults to force the country to start talking about strengthening gun laws. The reprehensible actions of one man, who entered Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012 armed with multiple military style, semi-automatic weapons have shaken all of us to the core. While it is impossible to make sense of this tragedy, one thing is crystal clear: we must do more to protect innocent people from increasing gun violence. Outside of the battlefield, there is no need for an average citizen to carry the kind of killing machines used in Newtown, CT. New York State already has an assault weapons ban in place, but it needs to be strengthened. In addition, we must ban high-capacity magazines, which allow one to shoot more than 10 rounds without reloading. We must require universal background checks on the sale of all guns and improve gun dealer regulations. We also must do a much better job of preventing guns, legal or otherwise, from falling into the hands of the wrong people. The State must require that gun licenses be renewed every five years, and we must tighten laws to ensure that criminals and the mentally incapacitated do not maintain existing licenses and firearms or acquire new ones.

With these changes the public will be safer, but guns will still fall into the hands of the wrong people, so we must provide law enforcement with tools critical to investigating and solving gun crime. Microstamping, a technology that uses a laser to imprint a unique code on the shell casing each time a gun is fired, will allow investigators to easily connect a bullet found at a crime scene to the gun that fired it. Microstamping represents a marked improvement over existing ballistic identification procedures.

Year after year, the Assembly has passed many of these measures, and more, with the goal of protecting innocent people against gun violence. The Senate, however, caving to the wishes of the gun lobby, has failed to pass these measures. The Assembly will pass these bills; it is time that the Senate muster the political courage to do what is right, and not merely what is politically expedient.

PCBs Still Present in Your Child's School

I have been fighting to ensure that the New York City Department of Education (DOE) prioritizes the removal of toxic polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-laden lighting ballasts from New York City public school buildings. PCBs are a known neurotoxin and endocrine disruptor, have profound impacts on children's cognitive development and ability to learn, and are also probable human carcinogens. In addition to this, clear scientific evidence has shown that PCB exposure damages women's ability to bear and nurse healthy children. Exposure to PCBs is particularly risky for pregnant women and those of

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FREE NOTARY SERVICE AT MY DISTRICT OFFICE EVERY FRIDAY 1 – 4 P.M.

The Devastation of Superstorm Sandy

Lessons Learned in the Aftermath of Superstorm Sandy

At the end of October 2012, Hurricane Sandy delivered a crushing blow to the East Coast. Though there was little rain, relentless winds and 11-foot storm surges knocked down trees and power lines, and flooded untold numbers of homes and businesses. The storm ravaged parts of Staten Island, Brooklyn and Queens, causing loss of life, and leaving thousands without power and shelter. As we begin rebuilding, I am struck by the generosity of so many New Yorkers, who gave their time, money, thoughts and prayers to the victims and survivors of Sandy. In a week's time, my office collected thousands of dollars worth of supplies, including clothing, food, diapers, pet and cleaning supplies from Upper West Siders who were standing by ready to help their struggling neighbors in the outer boroughs. The owner of a local car service generously donated an airport passenger shuttle and driver to my office for the day, enabling my staff and me to deliver these much-needed supplies to areas including Coney Island and Sea Gate in Brooklyn, neighborhoods that were laid waste by the storm.

After receiving an email from my office about the devastation caused by Sandy, the San Diego Jewish Academy, an elementary school located in San Diego, CA, hosted "the mother of all garage sales," during which it raised more than \$20,000 to be used for relief efforts. The Academy and my office have directed \$11,000 to be donated to the Met Council on Jewish



Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal sorts through donated goods as the office prepares to deliver them to the areas hard hit by Superstorm Sandy.

Poverty, which has been doing incredible work connecting people affected by the storm in every borough with supplies and support. Met Council will spend this money well, and I am so pleased that my emails, intended to be read by constituents living here on Manhattan's West Side, managed to reach the West Coast and an organization such as the San Diego Jewish Academy, which responded with so much generosity and caring.

In addition to the stories of loss, courage and sharing, we have also learned that New York City, the best and brightest city in the world, is not immune to the impacts of rising sea levels caused by climate change, and that we must band together and make difficult decisions on how to prevent a storm from humbling the City in the future. As our climate change-causing emissions continue to cause instability, sea levels will continue to rise. In the immediate future, we must turn our attention toward adaptation, by investing in and making infrastructure improvements. Sea walls and expanded marsh lands may be good, albeit expensive, first steps.

In the long term, we must look toward developing new, clean sources of renewable energy that will help to reduce climate change-causing emissions. The State must take the lead and provide incentives to help the burgeoning renewable industry take root and grow in New York. New York, true to its character, must be a center of innovation for the development and deployment of renewable energy, such as solar, wind and hydropower. I promise you that I will begin these conversations with my colleagues in the State legislature, and will continue until we devise workable solutions.



Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal stops to take a photo with Brooklyn Assemblymember Alec Brook-Krasny and volunteers in Coney Island who helped to unload the van full of supplies. These volunteers have been spending hours distributing food and other supplies to Sandy victims and helping them clean their homes and businesses.

PCBs Still Present in Your Child's School *continued from page 1*

child-bearing age. Given the clear risks to student and teacher health, PCB remediation should be prioritized, and all public school buildings in New York City should be remediated within two years.

The City has refused to acknowledge the clear risk posed to both students and their teachers by PCBs, and has failed to accelerate PCB remediation beyond a 10-year timeline, which everyone recognizes is way too long. Once again, I will be working to pass legislation I introduced in the New York State Assembly to require the City to remove and replace all PCB-contaminated lighting ballasts within two years. In addition, I will be working with a coalition of elected officials,

advocates and concerned parents and community members on a plan that would enable the City to issue Green Apple Bonds to help fund a complete remediation within two years. A spokesman for the United States Environmental Protection Agency recently said that the longer children are exposed to PCBs, the agency becomes increasingly less convinced that health effects will not occur. Though it should not take a law to require the City to fulfill its implicit duty to children and their parents by ensuring that school buildings are safe, I will continue to push to pass this legislation until each and every school building in New York City has new lighting ballasts that do not contain PCBs.

Community Corner

Do Not Call List: How to Make Sure You Really Don't Get Called

You're just sitting down to a quiet dinner with the family when the phone rings, and on the other end is an annoying telemarketer trying to sell you the next greatest thing, all for just \$199.99 plus shipping and handling. It's all too familiar, and incredibly annoying. Many of us have registered with the National Do Not Call Registry, which you can sign up for by visiting www.donotcall.gov or by calling 888-382-1222. I have heard from a number of constituents this year that despite being signed up for the National Do Not Call Registry, they continue to receive those unwanted calls. The increased use of prerecorded messages, which are hard to trace, as well as the failure of firms to check the list have contributed to the spike in these calls. There is also a New York State Do Not Call List that you should add your number to by registering at www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection/do_not_call/. If you continue to receive calls after having registered on both sites, or do not have access to a computer, please call my office at 212-873-6368 for help.



Assemblymember Rosenthal with Rosalyn Cordero, alumna, Class of 2012, Lawrence Kobilinsky, Chair of Science Department, and Anthony Carpi, Dean for Research, at ribbon cutting for John Jay College of Criminal Justice's new state-of-the-art science wing. The facilities, outfitted with the latest scientific equipment including a forensic toxicology lab, a crime-scene investigation lab and a bullet-recovery tank for ballistics research will provide students with access to cutting-edge technology, which will prepare them well for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, also known as STEM fields.

A Victory for Preservationists: A New Historic District Created on the West Side

With the indefatigable leadership of the West End Preservation Society (WEPS), the West Side is now home to a new historic district, the Riverside-West End Historic District Extension I. Extension I covers West End Avenue and Riverside Drive from West 79th Street to West 87th Street. First in a series of three proposed historic districts to be approved by the New York City Council, this area, which is a living monument to late 19th and early 20th century New York City, will now be protected for generations to come.

I have supported the creation of this historic district since the earliest days of WEPS, back in 2007 when the organization came into being in the living room of one of its founding members. I could not be more pleased that the New York City Council passed Extension I. Now, the historic buildings on this stretch of the Upper West Side, which were unofficial New York landmarks long before the landmarking process began, will be protected against incongruous development and will remain intact as a gem in this city that is constantly changing. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has held hearings about the two remaining parts of the Riverside-West End Historic District, which will create a district that stretches from West 70 to West 109 Streets, and is expected to vote on them in the coming year.

Big Decisions on Fracking Loom as DEC Dodges Procedural Deadlines

After urging by scientists, health professionals, advocates, elected officials and concerned community members about the need for

the State to conduct a comprehensive study of the potential health impacts of horizontal high-volume hydraulic fracturing, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) agreed to allow the New York State Department of Health (DOH), with the input of three consultants, to conduct only a limited health review. In addition, the public has been left in the dark with respect to the parameters of that health review and has been given no information on when the review will be completed.

In a procedural move that allowed the DEC to get around a November 29, 2012 regulatory deadline, it reissued the proposed regulations on fracking and opened them up to public comment despite the lack of a completed health review. The 30-day comment period extends from December 12, 2012 until January 11, 2013. It makes no sense to issue regulations before a comprehensive health review is done, and it circumvents the principles of transparency and accountability to not provide for public comment once the health study has been completed.

I believe the State must conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impacts that fracking could have on public health, and until that same public has had an opportunity to understand and comment on those regulations, the process should not move forward.

Sitting Comfortably While Waiting for the Bus? Assemblymember Rosenthal Restores Two Bus Shelters in Our Area

Seniors living in my district are very active – from their daily visits to senior centers, friends' homes, shopping trips or weekly stops at the pharmacy to retrieve prescriptions and other necessities – seniors rely on mass transit, particularly the buses, as a critical lifeline to keep them connected to their world. Though these folks are active indeed, a 10-minute wait for the bus if there is nowhere to sit is enough to turn a trip to the senior center into all but an impossibility. Covered bus shelters with seating for seniors or the disabled is essential if the Upper West Side is to remain accessible to all people. When I heard from a number of my older constituents that two bus shelters had been removed during construction some years earlier and had not been replaced, I contacted the New York City Department of Transportation to demand that the shelters be replaced. I am happy to report that bus shelters have now been installed near the southwest corner of West 72nd Street and Broadway as well as at 2150 Broadway, between West 75th and 76th Streets. If you would like a bus shelter replaced or installed on your bus line, please contact me at 212-873-6368 or rosenthal@assembly.state.ny.us.



Assemblymember Rosenthal, shown here with John Lehr, Chief Executive Officer of the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN), was honored by the national organization for her work to protect children with severe food allergies. Last year, Assemblymember Rosenthal introduced legislation that would require that all teachers in New York City public schools receive training to become competent in the administration of the epinephrine pen auto-injector.

NYCHA Redux: Spending Hundreds of Thousands on Google Search Results while Residents Wait Years for Repairs

Public housing residents in my district and citywide have long been suffering as a result of the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) mismanagement of the agency and its buildings. It is simply unacceptable that residents are forced to wait years for repairs while NYCHA sits on nearly \$1 billion in repair funds, and, adding insult to injury, spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on digital brand management to enhance its online image.

My office discovered that NYCHA solicited proposals and awarded a contract to a Washington State firm to generate positive publicity. That, in addition to a \$10 million study of the agency that it refused to release, illustrates its careless expenditure of limited resources. NYCHA should devote funding to essential repairs to residents' homes. In some of the worst cases, people have been waiting for months for basic, yet dire repairs. Because these management problems begin at the highest levels of NYCHA's administration, I plan to introduce legislation to overhaul the NYCHA Board. In the meantime, if you live in a NYCHA development and need help, please contact my office at 212-873-6368.

Assemblymember Rosenthal Ensures that Yoga Studios Remain Tax Exempt

After working closely with advocates from the yoga community and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance (State Finance), I am pleased that State Finance decided to exempt yoga studios from paying city sales tax, which would have driven many yoga studios out of business or led to increased costs for yoga practitioners across the State.

Earlier this year, State Finance began auditing yoga studios and threatened to charge the owners years in back taxes for failing to pay a 4.5% sales tax, which applies to gymnasiums, fitness centers and other health salons.

Working with yoga studio owners, teachers and students, I advocated to State Finance that unlike a Saturday morning spin class, where the goal is to shed pounds and increase aerobic fitness, yoga is primarily a spiritual experience, the emphasis of which is on the mind-body connection. While many students of yoga do indeed reap physical benefits in the form of increased flexibility, balance and weight loss, these are periphery impacts of a practice whose main objective is spiritual balance. I am pleased that State Finance recognized the unfairness of treating yoga studios like gyms and other fitness centers, and will not be charging independent studios the tax.

Nobody likes a Rat: Upper West Side Residents Complain about Marked Increase in Rodent Population

I have heard from many of you that rat populations have increased here on the Upper West Side, particularly in many playgrounds in Riverside and Central Parks. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has also noted that flooding of the subway tunnels caused by the storm has led to an increase of above-ground rodent populations as many rats, known to be notoriously good swimmers, swam from their homes underground. While the DOHMH has taken steps to ameliorate the rat problem that occurred as a result of Sandy, the problem persists in parks and some of our neighborhoods. I wrote to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation demanding that it address the issue immediately so that our children can play safely without fear of encountering disease-carrying rats. Parks has a responsibility to maintain area playgrounds in safe conditions. If you notice an increase in rats on your block or in a City park, please contact my office, and I will make sure that your complaint is forwarded to the appropriate agency for immediate follow up.



Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal joins Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Robert Tierney, Congressman Jerrold Nadler and museum President Ellen Futter after unveiling the new Theodore Roosevelt statue at the American Museum of Natural History. The statue, a life-sized bronze sculpture of the 26th president, was commissioned by the museum in celebration of the restoration of its Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall.



Assemblymember Rosenthal greets constituents with Mark Meridy, DOROT's Executive Director, at DOROT's Annual Thanksgiving Banquet at Congregation Rodeph Sholom.



Assemblymember Rosenthal joined elected officials, union leaders, advocates, concerned community members and parents at a news conference to announce a creative approach to financing PCB remediation in New York City public school buildings. The plan would require the City to issue Green Apple Bonds, at a low interest rate, to finance citywide remediation in two years. Assemblymember Rosenthal is supportive of the plan and has urged the City to come to the table to discuss this new approach.