



Assembly Member

Inez E. Dickens**Reports to the People**

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My Dear Neighbors,

I write to you with the heaviest of hearts as we try our best to endure the overwhelming effects of this COVID-19 epidemic. This disease has taken the lives of thousands of New Yorkers, and we are still months or even a year away from developing a proper cure/vaccine.

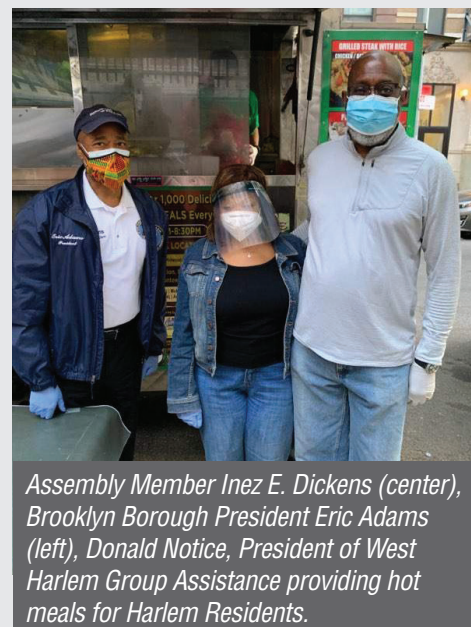
From the beginning stages when this disease first took effect, its dreaded reach infected every aspect of our lives negatively with no regard for socio-political, economic, religious, or ethnic backgrounds. Those who were the highest risk tried their best to defend themselves against this scourge, however, those who were considered immune became the disease's most trusted suppliers. Many New Yorkers went about their lives unknowing they were the conduits for transporting the disease.

As an elected representative of my community, a community composed of poor and middle-class families, many of whom are resource deficient, I was not surprised at witnessing firsthand how the economic challenges of my residents, and other communities with similar circumstance were forced to endure this tragedy while others were able to flee the city to their second or third homes in the suburbs or other states. I and many other elected officials have tried desperately to field the calls of thousands of New Yorkers desperate for help in acquiring food, medicine, groceries, protective coverings and access to unemployment assistance.

My office has had to instruct families how to find assistance to care for loved ones either stricken with the disease or suffering from unrelated illnesses. We burned the city's hotlines and reached out to all possible resources in order to supply our neighbors with all the necessary contacts and formalities to bring them the help they needed. Consequently, this also included grieving family members who requested help in removing relatives who passed away in the home.

As proud as I am of the men, women, and even children who call the 70th Assembly District home, who risked their own lives to gather mask, gloves, hand sanitizers, paper tissue and towels, food, medicine or even put together a cheer of support for their fellow residents who were shut in for their safety. I was also emboldened in seeing them thank first responders for their unparalleled dedication. In the face of such dire circumstances, with death being so close to all of us, we were able to pull together for the ones we loved, and the ones we didn't know because it was the humane thing to do. Even some of those who had the opportunity and the means to leave stayed to be that rock of support for those who were left with nothing as the city and state shut down.

Too all of you, on behalf of those who couldn't, I say, thank you, thank, you, thank you.



Assembly Member Inez E. Dickens (center), Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams (left), Donald Notice, President of West Harlem Group Assistance providing hot meals for Harlem Residents.

HEALTH

Prior to COVID-19, New York's Health and Hospitals were already operating under a cloud of uncertainty due to a lack in funding from the state and federal government. So once this disease exploded, it managed to highlight every single aspect in which doctors, nurses and administrators have been emphasizing as areas of need. Now, as New York begins to operate at an even greater deficit than it was before, we will seek to use emergency federal funds to address some of those problems head on.

We are struggling to find a path forward for our state and local governments to continue to operate without considerable financial assistance from our federal government. Without aid, we cannot continue to fund critical services such as healthcare, public safety, transportation and education. Under the cloud of a global pandemic, the most productive state in the country is facing massive cuts to our medical professionals, first responders, teachers and transportation workers – those who put their lives on the line to keep New Yorkers safe and whose jobs do not end with the pandemic, Speaker Heastie and the Assembly Members wrote.

The State Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget that passed at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis adopted difficult cuts in order to close a \$7 billion gap. The revised financial plan released last week shows a scenario calling for an additional \$10 billion in spending reductions across all sectors, excluding public health and safety among other mandatory costs. It would cut local assistance 20 to 30 percent, which would mean reductions to everything from school aid to Medicaid, property tax relief, agricultural support and more. It would also mean a 10 percent reduction to the state's workforce, including those who maintain our roads and bridges and those processing unemployment claims.



Assembly Inez E. Dickens delivering food for residents of NYCHA Lincoln Houses.

ELECTIONS

New Yorkers were highly energized to participate in our state election process, and despite concerns regarding the coronavirus, many voters made their voices clear through absentee ballots and in person voting to support candidates those candidates that best fit their views. I look forward to representing your interests on police and criminal justice reform, healthcare, education, affordable housing, and economic development.



Assembly Member Dickens at the dedication of Harlem's Black Lives Matter Mural



Assembly Member Dickens and Mayor de Blasio participate in painting the Black Lives Matter mural.



Assembly Member Dickens, Mayor Bill de Blasio and State Senator Brian Benjamin rally to bring peace after several nights of shootings taking place leading up to the July 4th weekend.

EDUCATION

- The governor announced that schools with reopening plans approved by the state Education Department can resume in the fall, if their region’s 14-day average infection rate has remained below 5% since reopening began. Schools that have reopened must close if the region’s 7-day average infection rate exceeds 9% after Aug. 1.
- To protect the health of students, faculty and staff, the following guidelines must be followed:
 - Everyone must wear face masks in school facilities and on school grounds, though students should be permitted to remove their masks during meals, instruction and for short breaks, as long as they maintain social distance. Students must also wear face masks on school buses and measures should be considered to reduce bus density.
 - Everyone must maintain a distance of at least 6 feet in all directions, or physical barriers must be constructed if maintaining that distance isn’t possible. When students are singing, playing wind instruments or engaged in aerobic exercise, a distance of 12 feet must be maintained.
 - To the greatest extent possible, schools should “cohort” students. Cohorts are self-contained, reasonably sized groups of students that must remain fixed for the duration of the COVID-19 health emergency. Schools must also limit intermingling between cohorts as much as possible.
 - Students, faculty, staff and any other visitors must be screened before entering school facilities. Any person with a temperature above 100.0°F must be denied entry or sent to a dedicated pickup area. Faculty and staff must also answer daily screening questionnaires, while students should periodically fill out questionnaires.
 - Schools must develop specific policies for vulnerable populations, including students, faculty and staff, that accommodate their specific situations to the greatest extent possible.
 - For more information on school reopening guidelines, visit: https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Pre-K_to_Grade_12_Schools_MasterGuidance.pdf
- Socially distanced, outdoor graduations of up to 150 people are now permitted. The state is also allowing schools to hold drive-in or drive-through ceremonies. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-outdoor-graduations-150-people-will-be-allowed-beginning-june-26th>; <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/video-audio-photos-rush-transcript-governor-cuomo-announces-state-expanding-covid-19-testing>)
- All New York City playgrounds and parks are open. Fields and courts are also open. (<https://www.nycgovparks.org/about/health-and-safety-guide/coronavirus>)

Changes to Day-to-Day Life

- New York City is in Phase 4 of reopening. The NY Forward Business Reopen Lookup Tool allows you to see whether a business is eligible to reopen: www.businessexpress.ny.gov/app/nyforward.
- To see which categories of businesses will be allowed to resume service as the reopening process progresses, visit: forward.ny.gov/industries-reopening-phase. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-20231-continuing-temporary-suspension-and-modification-laws-relating-disaster-emergency>)
- During Phase 4, the following categories of businesses can resume operations:
 - Low-Risk Outdoor Arts & Entertainment
 - Media Production
 - Professional Sports Competitions With No Fans
- Restaurants and bars can now provide outdoor dining. Tables must be spaced 6 feet apart, all staff must wear face coverings and customers must wear face coverings when not seated. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-outdoor-dining-restaurants-will-be-permitted-phase-two-reopening>)
- To ensure food establishments are complying with COVID-19 protocols, restaurants and bars can only serve alcohol to patrons who are ordering and eating food. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-regulations-bars-and-restaurants-ensure-compliance-state-social>)
- Houses of worship can operate with a 33% occupancy limit as long as social distancing and other safety measures are in place. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/ReligiousandFuneralServicesSummaryGuidance.pdf>)
- Nursing homes and long-term care facilities can begin to allow visitors for compassionate care situations. The facilities can only allow visitors if they’ve reported no new COVID-19 cases in 28 days, limit visits to a maximum of two guests at a time, restrict visitation to 10% of residents at one time and pre-screen all visitors. ([https://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2020/2020-07-10_resumption_of_limited_nh_visitation.htm#:~:text=\(July%2010%2C%202020\)%20%2D,the%20federal%20Centers%20for%20Medicare%20%26](https://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2020/2020-07-10_resumption_of_limited_nh_visitation.htm#:~:text=(July%2010%2C%202020)%20%2D,the%20federal%20Centers%20for%20Medicare%20%26))
- Medical schools statewide can open to prepare for new students in the summer and fall, as long as they take appropriate safety precautions. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/video-audio-photos-rush-transcript-governor-cuomo-announces-state-expanding-covid-19-testing>)
- Retail stores can offer in-store service as long as they reduce maximum store capacity by 50% and require face coverings for customers and customer-facing employees. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/GeneralRetailSummaryGuidance.pdf>)
- To help protect at-risk individuals and essential workers from exposure to COVID-19, New Yorkers need to wear masks or face coverings in public when social distancing isn’t possible. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-20217-continuing-temporary-suspension-and-modification-laws-relating-disaster-emergency>)
- Businesses have the right to deny entry or service to individuals who aren’t wearing masks. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-20234-continuing-temporary-suspension-and-modification-laws-relating-disaster-emergency>)
- Dentist offices may now open for non-emergency services, as long as they adhere to state safety regulations. For a complete list of state guidelines, visit: www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/DentistryMasterGuidance.pdf
- Major pharmacy chains in New York State have agreed to offer free home delivery. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/amid-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic-governor-cuomo-announces-nys-pause-functions-extended-next-two>)
- State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices in the five boroughs can now process registrations and other transactions by mail, as well as through secure drop boxes located at each office. Limited in-person transactions, by reservation only, and road tests have also resumed at certain offices. (<https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/dmv-reopening-guidance>)



Legislation Passed by Your Assembly Member

A2102	Dickens – Establishes tenants’ right to offset rental payments by the cost of certain emergency repairs
A2103	Dickens – Directs the commissioner of labor to establish the form and content for contracts for the employment of domestic workers
A2114	Dickens – Relates to identity theft; clarifies personal identifying information and what acts constitute the offense of identity theft
A2138	Dickens – Prohibits the use of live human subjects as surgical subjects as part of state dental professional licensing examination
A2233	Dickens – Prohibits the erection or maintenance of billboards advertising alcoholic beverages within 1000 feet of schools or playgrounds
A2260	Dickens – Defines as aggravated harassment in the third degree photographing persons entering or leaving reproductive health care services facilities
A2409	Dickens – Regulates the use of human subjects for medical research and experimentation
A3051	Dickens – Provides for tuberculosis screenings outreach and services in epidemic areas and makes an appropriation therefor
A3239	Dickens – Authorizes guidelines for granting contracts to disabled veterans eligible under the home for heroes program
A3242	Dickens – Provides that in proceedings to review real property assessments in N.Y. city assessing method, capitalization rate, etc. must be disclosed
A3309	Dickens – Requires a public hearing for substantial change in transit authority service by the New York city transit authority
A3354	Dickens – Relates to prohibiting the use of residential automatic pesticide misting systems
A3362	Dickens – Provides for the allocation of monies for dental health services in the medicaid managed care program, the child health insurance program and the family health plus program
A3384	Dickens – Provides for funding for a sound basic education
A3385A	Dickens – Requires public officers and bodies to provide interpreters and assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired at public hearings under certain conditions
A3388	Dickens – Creates the New York city transit authority safety advisory panel to study and report on safety from terrorist acts
A3398	Dickens – Relates to digital blocking capability
A3833	Dickens – Relates to the racial and ethnic makeup of the board of parole
A3837	Dickens – Relates to the “juvenile offender second chance act”
A3838	Dickens – Requires applicants for public assistance to be fully informed that they may be liable to reimburse the state for benefits received
A3853	Dickens – Requires the board of elections to provide email notifications to voters whenever they change the location of a polling place
A3866	Dickens – Requires nursing homes that maintain a trust fund or funds into which residents’ money is deposited to conduct quarterly audits and to report the findings of such audits to the commissioner of public health
A5495	Dickens – Relates to eliminating rent increases for structures due to major capital improvements
A5772	Dickens – Relates to language equality and acquisition for deaf children
A8285	Dickens – Relates to disclosure of certain employment statistics of state-assisted construction projects
A8595	Dickens – Requires products containing glyphosate to have a warning label
A8596	Dickens – Allows police officers to wear body-worn cameras, and prohibits agreements with other state or federal agencies that prevent the use of such cameras
A9077	Dickens – Prevents genealogy firms from sharing genetic information of individuals with law enforcement without a signed waiver
A10436	Rules (Dickens) – Relates to furloughs of employees by certain public retirement systems

- Garage sales are now permitted statewide, as long as people maintain social distancing, wear face masks and adhere to a 10-person limit. (<https://twitter.com/LtGovHochulNY/status/1271057092019798017>)
- Low-risk youth sports – which includes baseball, cross country, crew, field hockey, gymnastics and softball – are allowed as long as spectators are limited to two per child. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-low-risk-youth-sports-regions-phase-three-can-begin-july-6th>)
- Hospitals and group homes statewide can allow visitors at their discretion. Facilities that allow visitation must adhere to state guidelines, including temperature checks for all visitors. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/video-audio-photos-rush-transcript-governor-cuomo-announces-us-open-be-held-without-fans-august>)



Assembly Members Inez E. Dickens and Al Taylor, fmr. Congressman Charles Rangel, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

Financial Relief

■ New laws protect homeowners and tenants by:

- requiring New York regulated institutions to grant 90 days of forbearance to residential mortgagors who can demonstrate financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ch. 112 of 2020)
- prohibiting courts from issuing a warrant of eviction or judgment of possession against a residential tenant who suffered financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic for the nonpayment of rent (Ch. 127 of 2020)

■ New state law allows for sick leave and benefits to quarantined/isolated workers. (nyassembly.gov/Press/files/20200318a.php)

■ It also eliminates the one-week waiting period for UI claims for workers directly affected by COVID-19. To file a claim, visit labor.ny.gov/unemploymentassistance.shtm and follow the on-site instructions. (labor.ny.gov/unemploymentassistance.shtm)

■ Residential streets subject to Alternate Side Parking (ASP) regulations will now only be cleaned once a week. Streets that have multiple ASP days will now only be cleaned on the later day of the week, meaning residents only have to move their cars once a week. (<https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01011>)

■ New York State is aware of multiple scams related to the coronavirus. To file a complaint or learn more, visit <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/#crnt&panel1-1>.



2020 has been a year of great sadness, adversity, trauma and loss. We've been forced to say goodbye to great leaders who have carried us over the decades. I know the heavens will welcome Congressman John Lewis and Mayor David Dinkins as true soldiers in the fight for freedom.

On behalf of my staff and I who work incredibly hard to answer the call of our neighbors in need, we thank you for continuing to support our efforts during these most difficult of circumstances. The fight is long, and the journey is arduous but because of you we will continue to advocate for the issues that matter most. We ask that you please be safe as the COVID pandemic is in its second wave and is still ravaging our community. We must continue to wear masks, practice social distancing and by all means please stay safe. Regardless of your faith or beliefs, I wish you a very blessed Happy Holiday and a wonderful New Year.

Supreme Court rules on the right side of history on abortion access

The Supreme Court struck down a Louisiana law that required doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals, ruling that the regulation placed an undue burden on women seeking abortions. Putting in place regulations like admitting privilege laws only serves to block constitutionally protected access to reproductive care. The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision represents a significant victory in the nationwide fight to protect a woman's right to choose. We can only hope that we see similar decisions down the line in this ongoing battle.

Housing

The Assembly was able to pass laws to help new Yorkers remain in their homes by passing legislation for \$100 million in rental assistance. It prevents utility companies from terminating service to for those affected by COVID-19, protects health care workers from employer retaliation, and the emergency relief Act of 2020 provides rental assistance through July to New Yorkers whose income is less than 80% AMI, and spent more than 30% of their income on rent prior to March 7 and lost income.

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Winter 2020

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**Check with your local grocery store
about limited hours and/or special hours for seniors to shop.**

For updates and more information, visit the New York State Department of Health website at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> or call 888-364-3065.

Additional information can be found in multiple languages at www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page.

Sign up for email updates from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html



Assembly Member Inez E. Dickens with NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, NY State Committeeman Londel Davis Jr., and brother Donnel Davis.