

Assemblymember
Tony Simone

Assembly District 75



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Dear friends,

Happy Labor Day! I am proud to have been raised in a union family, where my grandfather, a Teamsters delegate, taught me to always stand up for workers. This holiday recognizes the tremendous contribution that workers have and continue to make in our country. I celebrate Labor Day to honor unions for many of the rights that we sometimes take for granted; a fair living wage, a 40-hour work week, access to quality health care, even the concept of the weekend. Labor is the backbone of our nation, and everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect in their workplace and beyond, and unions help us make that a reality.

In the past few years, unions have had a surge of popularity: Gallup's data shows that 70% of Americans now have positive views of unions. In the post-pandemic world, workers have more power than ever, and I will always stand firm against companies and CEO's that try to extort their workers just for profit.

New York is a union town. It always has been, and always will be.

Happy Labor Day!

Tony

2024 Legislative & Budget Update

I am happy to report that the state legislature has finished the legislative session for 2024. This session, we passed a budget that contains hard won victories in many areas, including building affordable housing, healthcare, education, and the passage of Sammy's Law. In this newsletter, you can read more about what we accomplished this year. I am proud to have delivered substantial wins for my constituents.

Before I was elected, I called out a number of issues threatening our neighborhoods such as the affordable housing crisis, public safety, the lack of serious mental healthcare, threats to the LGBTQ+ community, and the destruction of our environment. While I am proud of the progress

we've made on these issues in this year's budget and legislative victories, these changes are not nearly enough and I will continue to fervently work towards permanent solutions.

My Community Office at 214 West 29th Street, Suite 1401, 212-807-7900, Simonet@nyassembly.gov is here to help you in any way we can. 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. If your block association or another group needs my help or would like me to come to a meeting, please contact my office. 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.



Speaking on the floor of the Assembly chamber.

Congestion Pricing Update

As you may have read, during the last week of the legislative session Governor Kathy Hochul announced that she was ending the congestion pricing program that was due to begin on June 30th. I am extremely disappointed in and frustrated by the Governor's decision; I have been a strong supporter of congestion pricing and the improvements to our city and state that it would have created.

Congestion pricing is not just about money for the MTA, although the number of capital projects that are grinding to a halt without sufficient funding is staggering. The policy also would have reduced traffic and pollution, and increased street safety, which are critical issues that impact the health and quality of life of our district. While I have long called for exemptions for residents within the central business district, I have also held firm that congestion pricing would have made a huge, positive difference in our city.

Historic Wins in the 2024 Budget

Building Affordable Housing & Protecting Tenants

Addressing the affordable housing crisis was a top priority in this year's budget talks, both for myself and many of my colleagues. This spring, the Assembly voted on a housing package designed to tackle the housing crisis. As I've said many times before, we are in a housing crisis due to decades of inaction, and it will take more than one budget to dig us out of the hole.

This deal, while by no means perfect, lays the groundwork to begin addressing the housing emergency. One of the crucial ways we can bring rent prices down is by increasing supply, and this budget will get shovels back in the ground through a new Mitchell-Lama program, incentives for affordable housing development and office conversions, and a significant investment in transforming vacant, state-owned sites into housing. I spoke on the Assembly floor about the need to develop these sites, particularly in regards to Community Board 4's Housing Plan which presents a positive vision for New York's housing future.



Speaking on the floor about the need to develop state-owned sites.

All of these policies will vastly improve the housing market. However, we must recognize that building enough housing to outpace the unprecedented demand will take years. We must be doing more to keep current tenants secure in their homes and communities. For the first time in NYS history, rent protections for market rate tenants have been passed. We are where we are today because of the tireless work of so many tenants and advocates who made this happen, ensuring our state is equitable and livable for everyone.

Unfortunately, the version of Good Cause passed this year is not good enough. I am concerned that there are so many questions about eligibility and enforcement of the law that I fear we will be waiting for court interpretation of which tenants are protected. We have so much more work to do to resolve the gaps and ensure everyone has a defense against shady landlords and ridiculous rent increases. This is not the end of Good Cause; it's only the beginning.

Overall, this deal takes important steps that I am proud to support. Its historic nature means that we are laying a foundation for future legislative work, and we aren't wasting any time finding ways to address the inaccessible and unaffordable nature of our housing market.

There is much more to do in the coming years, and I will continue fighting for more affordable housing and a market that prioritizes tenants over wealthy landlords!

Stopping Retail Theft

In recent years, retail theft has become a major concern for all of us. It's critical that we

guarantee that New York is not only a safe place to live, work, and commute, but also to shop. The Assembly has passed a number of measures to address the public safety concerns around retail theft, including categorizing assault on a retail worker as a class E felony; creating a new crime of fostering the sale of stolen goods online in order to combat crime rings; allowing prosecutors to charge thieves with grand larceny; and creating a tax credit for small businesses to cover retail theft expenses and security. These steps will stem the tide of retail crime that we've seen in recent years, and make New York safer for everyone, particularly the workers who operate the stores we rely on.

I was proud to join my state colleagues and Governor Kathy Hochul for the signing of legislation protecting retail workers.

Sammy's Law

After many years of tireless advocacy, Sammy's Law has finally passed as part of this year's budget. Sammy Cohen Eckstein was a 12-year-old boy who was killed by a driver in Brooklyn in 2013. Since his tragic death, his mother, Amy Cohen, transformed her grief into action by championing this legislation that would have saved her son's life. With the passage of Sammy's Law, New York City can now lower its speed limits from 25 MPH to 20 MPH, without the approval of New York State, which will help to slow traffic and make our streets safer for all New Yorkers. Keeping the street safe for pedestrians, bikers, and drivers alike is one of my top priorities in Albany.

Healthcare

More than half a million people in New York State rely on insulin every day. This life-saving medication will no longer be subject to copays or any cost sharing requirements, increasing its accessibility and safeguarding the health of so many people who have struggled to afford it.

The budget makes critical investments in health care services including \$800 million in funding for financially distressed and safety-net hospitals. The spending plan also includes \$31.1 million to fund critical programs to help individuals involved in the criminal justice system and diagnosed with a mental illness get the care and services they need.

Environmental Funding

The enacted budget invests \$2.5 billion in funding for the environment, including \$400 million for the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and \$500 million to support New York State's clean water infrastructure. These allocations will allow us to continue to build a green future for our state, protecting citizens from the ongoing effects of a warming planet.

Education Funding

The enacted budget includes \$35.9 Billion in school aid to public schools, which includes \$24.9 billion in Foundation Aid, a \$934.5 million increase over the previous year. It is crucial that we address the effects that the pandemic has had on our children's education, and this funding will ensure that schools can educate kids and prepare them for their futures. The budget also reinstates the "Hold Harmless" provision within Foundation Aid, which prevents any cuts to school districts' reception of Foundation Aid.

Illegal Cannabis Shops

I have been working closely with my colleagues around the city and state to devise a solution for the proliferation of illegal cannabis shops that are breaking the law and targeting kids with their products. To combat the illegal shops, OCM can now issue an order to immediately padlock a store with an egregious violation and any other store on a second violation.

In addition, the sheriff's office now has the authority to conduct regulatory inspections of cannabis shops and will have the power to require landlords to take action to remove the occupant within five days. If they do not, a fine of five times the rent charged or \$50,000 will be issued. These measures are key to curbing the illegal market and I look forward to the improvements that enforcement will provide.

Hate Crimes

This year's budget modernizes the New York State hate crimes law by including 31 new offenses as eligible for hate crimes. They include gang assault, certain sex crimes, human trafficking, graffiti, false reporting, and criminal possession of a weapon. I was proud to join my colleagues Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblymember Grace Lee in pushing for this change. It is essential that those who commit such horrendous crimes are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, and this change will guarantee prosecutors can pursue hateful criminals exhaustively.

Funding Secured

I led a number of funding initiatives to help our district and the state, and I'm proud to have secured the following in this year's budget:

- \$632,000 for Professional Performing Arts School in Hell's Kitchen for theatrical and media education programs
- \$450,000 for New Alternatives for Children's Healthy@Home program serving low-income families with children who have medically complex needs
- \$400,000 for LiveOn NY to connect older adults with critical resources available to help them make ends meet, remain in their homes, and thrive in life.
- \$180,000 for GMHC to fund HIV and STI testing, linkage to care programs and supportive housing services.
- \$100,000 for Covenant House in Hell's Kitchen to support their legal services department, youth trafficking prevention programs and youth mental health services.
- \$75,000 for I.T.A.C. to provide assistance to small manufacturing businesses

Community News

Updates on the Closure of Mount Sinai Beth Israel

Over the past year, Mount Sinai Hospital has been in the process of shutting Beth Israel, its campus on the Lower East Side. Together with my colleagues in Manhattan and community stakeholders, I have advocated for months to prevent the closure of this hospital, which provides life-saving medical services to all of Manhattan and New York City at large. Unfortunately, despite widespread community opposition, Mount Sinai has been given conditional approval by the Department of Health to shut down Beth Israel.

While the conditions of the closure plan reflect efforts by DOH and Mount Sinai to respond to serious concerns we have raised on behalf of our constituents, it falls wholly short of reassuring the community that the closure will not impede access to essential healthcare. We are deeply concerned that the resources Mount Sinai is offering to counter the closure are inadequate. Specifically, we are concerned that Mount Sinai has not provided a sufficient time frame for the closure; that the new urgent care facility will be guaranteed to be 24 hours a day for only three months; that language regarding the services the urgent care facility will provide is unclear and vague; and that the process for transfer agreements between nearby hospitals and Mount Sinai is ambiguous.

Despite the outcome of the Beth Israel closure, I remain committed to working with my colleagues to ensure that the closure does not result in any decrease to New Yorkers' access to high-quality healthcare, and will stand with the community to protect healthcare access for all.



I've been standing with advocates and community organizers for months to save Mount Sinai Beth Israel. This community hospital is crucial to the safety and health of all of Manhattan.

Protecting Trans Kids in New York City Schools

This past March, Community Education Council District 2 passed Resolution #248, which called on the New York City Department of Education to re-examine the landmark 2019 guidelines regarding the rights of trans kids to play on the sports team that align with their gender identity. With the support of 18 other elected officials who represent parents and teachers in District 2, I wrote a letter to the CEC urging them to rescind the transphobic and discriminatory resolution. I believe that our school system must stand for justice and equity, not bigotry and hate. Our CECs must fight to protect every student, not ridicule or attack them. I stand firmly in support of trans people everywhere and their right to live fulfilling lives, and I will always stand up for kids, who must have every protection possible.



Leading a crowd of friends at the 2024 Pride March! Even in the heat and humidity, I was so proud to celebrate my community in partnership with Assemblymembers Grace Lee, Alex Bore, Harvey Epstein, Jo Anne Simon, and Equality NY!

Mark Your Calendar!

**SHRED
TRUCK**

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
ASSEMBLYMEMBER TONY SIMONE
AND
 STATE SENATOR
BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL

Bring your old documents to be shredded
& clear out your space!

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15TH
9AM-NOON

MANHATTAN PLAZA
SOUTH SIDE OF 43RD STREET
BETWEEN 9TH & 10TH AVENUES

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!
(212) 807-7900
simonet@nyassembly.gov



On **Tuesday, October 15th**, my office is partnering with NYC Department of Sanitation and Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal to bring a shred truck to Hell's Kitchen! We will be parked on the

south side of 43rd Street, between 9th & 10th Avenues, from 9am-noon. Bring your old papers to be shredded and clear out your space for fall!

More Community News



When it comes to policy tackling climate change, I had to learn from the best: former Vice President Al Gore! I was thrilled to join him to discuss the best ways to address the climate crisis this spring.



The MTA Board must have rider representation, in order for everyday New Yorkers to have a voice in the decisions made for their transit system.



Listening to the stories of those who have lost family members to gun violence. We must take action to end this epidemic, and I am committed to protecting our community from the scourge of guns.



The best day of the year: Shred Truck Day! Coming together as a community to safely dispose of unneeded documents and help protect our planet by recycling is a great feeling. I can't wait to host another of these events this fall at Manhattan Plaza!

Community Resources

Curbside Composting is Expanding!

Starting October 6th, residents in Manhattan can order a brown bin for curbside composting from the NYC Department of Sanitation! Composting is a great way to get rid of your food scraps in an environmentally friendly way, and give back to Mother Earth at the same time.

Interested in ordering a brown bin? [You can do so here!](#)

NYC Parks Are Hiring!

Looking for a job? Develop your skills with NYC Parks!

The Parks Opportunity Program allows you to participate in job training while working to keep the city's parks, playgrounds, and other facilities clean and green!

Our program offers:

- A six-month maintenance position with NYC Parks earning \$18.54 per hour.
- Paid career coaching and resume development to help you find future employment.
- Earn valuable credentials such as High School Equivalency, driver's license, CDL, security certifications, horticulture training and more.

Interested in earning and learning with the Parks Opportunity Program? Sign up by scanning the code or visiting bit.ly/ParksOpportunityProgram.

For questions, email workforce.development@parks.nyc.gov.

Visits to Historic Houses in NYC

Looking for something to do this Labor Day weekend? Check out one of New York City's historic houses! Below you'll find a map of Manhattan's historic house museums, including one right here in District 75.

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre: 1876 Swedish Schoolhouse
Museum Themes: Performing Arts, Children's Programming
Nonprofit Partner: City Parks Foundation
Open Hours: Varies (Dependent Upon Marionette Showtimes)
Manhattan Community District 7: Upper West Side



Manhattan Historic Houses

Merchant's House Museum: 1832 Greek Revival Row House

Manhattan Community District 2: NoHo

Nonprofit Partner: Merchant's House Museum

Museum Themes: Mercantile History, Immigration

Open Hours: Wed-Sun: 1PM-5PM (Last Entry 4:30PM)

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre: 1876 Swedish Schoolhouse

Manhattan Community District 7: Upper West Side

Nonprofit Partner: City Parks Foundation

Museum Themes: Performing Arts, Children's Programming

Open Hours: Varies (Dependent Upon Marionette Showtimes)

Gracie Mansion: 1799 Country House

Manhattan Community District 8: Yorkville

Nonprofit Partner: Gracie Mansion Conservancy

Museum Themes: History of the Arts, Mercantile History, Politics

Open Hours: Mon: 10:30AM-1:30PM

Little Red Lighthouse: 1880 Cast Iron Lighthouse

Manhattan Community District 12: Washington Heights

Partner: Urban Park Rangers

Museum Themes: Maritime History, Technology

Open Hours: By Appointment Only

Morris-Jumel Mansion: 1765 Country Retreat

Manhattan Community District 12: Washington Heights

Nonprofit Partner: Morris-Jumel Mansion Museum

Museum Themes: America's Birth, Women's History

Open Hours: Tues-Thurs: 1pm-4PM, Frid-Sun: 11AM-4PM

Dyckman Farmhouse Museum: 1784 Dutch Colonial Farmhouse

Manhattan Community District 12: Inwood

Nonprofit Partner: Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance

Museum Themes: Dutch History, Black History, Agriculture

Open Hours: Wed-Fri: 12PM-4PM, Sat: 10AM-4PM

