

# Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

*Reports to the People of the 81<sup>st</sup> Assembly District*

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*Serving the communities of Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Norwood,  
 Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield, and Woodlawn*

## WHEN OUR COMMUNITY FIGHTS TOGETHER, WE WIN TOGETHER

### One Step Closer to Saving the Historic Jerome Park Reservoir

The Jerome Park Reservoir, which is a designated National Historic Site, has long been an iconic asset of the Northwest Bronx community. For generations, families and neighborhoods have grown up around the reservoir – basking in the view from their apartments, walking their dogs around it, gazing across it from the many nearby parks and playgrounds, birdwatching, enjoying a cool breeze, and much more. Tens of thousands of people have grown up around the reservoir, including me, and I want that future for tens of thousands more.

Over the last three decades, our historic reservoir has come under attack often and our community has always banded together to defend it. Last summer, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection announced plans to keep the North Basin of our reservoir permanently drained. Their stated rationale for this decision was to use the Historic Jerome Park Reservoir as an emergency overflow site for the ill-advised Croton Filtration Plant they decided to build in Van Cortlandt Park more than twenty years ago.

I am pleased to share that they have reconsidered this position and have guaranteed that the reservoir will permanently have water in it (except during construction and routine maintenance, such as is currently going on for the gate house rehabilitation project).

However, this fight isn't over yet. DEP only promised that they would keep 5-8 feet of water in the reservoir – not nearly enough to preserve the historic nature and important communal aspect that we know and love. DEP again reiterated that they cannot allow public access. We need to keep pushing to preserve this incredible and historic element of our community for future generations.

I grew up around the reservoir, from junior high school to high school to college. I lived across the street for many years. This is personal to me just like it's personal to so many of our neighbors. Working together, we will save the Historic Jerome Park Reservoir once and for all.



#### **MARCHING AGAINST HATE AND ANTI-SEMITISM**

*I was proud to join the "No Hate. No Fear. Solidarity March" following several anti-Semitic attacks in the New York City metropolitan region. Pictured (l-r): Community Leader Eric Dinowitz, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale Senior Rabbi Steven Exler, Council Member Andrew Cohen, Congressman Eliot Engel, and myself.*

### Express Bus Reprieve

One of the most common complaints I get from constituents is about shoddy bus service. Buses are often late, overcrowded, slow and stuck in traffic – and riders are fed up. I was excited and optimistic in 2018 when the MTA announced their plans to redesign the Bronx Bus Network. I was encouraged when they engaged in multiple rounds of outreach, both before and after they released their draft plan.

Like many of you, I was shocked when the MTA released their proposed final plan for Bronx buses. The MTA was proposing severe cuts to almost all express bus routes in the 81st Assembly District – including the BxM1, BxM2, BxM3, BxM4, BxM11, and BxM18. There were several routing changes, most concerning the removal of express bus service between Riverdale and the Upper East Side, and massive reductions in "off-peak" service. There were also no proposed increases to local bus service.

Our community rose together swiftly and in vocal protest. Five hundred people came to an emergency town hall meeting that my colleagues and I organized – with barely a week's notice, on a cold and rainy night – so that the MTA could see what express bus service means to our community.

I am proud to share that the MTA has promised that there will be no changes to express bus service this year.

This is a direct result of our united effort, including the involvement of many community groups and individuals, but we have to keep fighting to save this important service. The MTA will continue to monitor ridership, but they may propose changes again for 2021.

Mass transit is about more than just turning a profit, although it is important that our systems operate efficiently. Mass transit is about empowering people to get where they need to go quickly, safely, and affordably. There are certainly ways to improve our bus service: make the express bus fare compatible with unlimited weekly or monthly MetroCards, support HOV lanes on highways, invest in increased local bus frequency, and more. Please continue to share your thoughts and ideas on how our express bus system could be improved.

The MTA needs to keep hearing from us and I want to keep hearing from you too.

### **NOTICE: 16- and 17-Year-Olds can Now Pre-Register to Vote in New York**

Thanks to new voting reforms passed in 2019, all otherwise eligible 16- and 17-year-olds can pre-register to vote so that they will be automatically granted voting status upon their eighteenth birthday. The pre-registration process is the same as the standard registration process. Just fill out a voter registration form or go online to the DMV website and enter your driver license/state ID number. Call the Bronx Board of Elections for more information (718-299-9017) or feel free to contact my office at [dinowitzj@nyassembly.gov](mailto:dinowitzj@nyassembly.gov) or 718-796-5345.

### **FREE Notary Service**

Our office provides free notary service during regular office hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please bring two forms of identification, at least one with your photo and signature, if you would like your signature notarized.

# BRONX RUNDOWN

## Stand Up. Get Counted. Census 2020

New York is working together to make sure everyone gets counted so that we can make sure we get what we deserve from the federal government. Individuals can do a few things to help:



### Quick Facts

- 1) The census is strictly confidential.** There are very strict rules prohibiting the sharing of information, even with law enforcement. Federal law guarantees your information will be kept confidential for 72 years, punishable by penalty of up to \$250,000 and/or 5 years in prison.
- 2) Information cannot be used against you or anyone else.** No exceptions. This includes both law enforcement and in court. You are free to answer honestly about how many people live in your apartment – regardless of whether they are permitted on your lease, their documentation status, or their status with the criminal justice system.
- 3) The official Census Day is April 1.** If you are unsure of where to list somebody on the census, use April 1 as your reference point. Common sources of confusion are when people move homes, when custody is evenly split, or when a child doesn't live with their parents.
- 4) You will be asked about things like age, sex, and the number of people who live in your home.** You will not be asked for Social Security numbers, bank or credit card numbers, money or donations, or anything related to political parties.
- 5) Over \$675 billion is distributed across the country based on census data.** Help make sure we get our fair share!

Visit [nyc.gov/census](https://nyc.gov/census) or [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov) for more information, or feel free to contact my office at [DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov](mailto:DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov) or 718-796-5345.

## Fair Treatment for Co-Ops

One of the most common avenues to homeownership in the 81st Assembly District is through cooperative housing. Co-ops empower people to create equity in their residence and help build stable and strong communities like we have here in the Bronx.

However, it seems that too often co-ops are not receiving fair treatment under the law compared with their homeowner or condominium-owner counterparts. For example, reverse mortgages (which allow seniors over a certain age to convert the equity stored in their home into liquid cash) are currently not available to co-op owners. Similarly, co-op owners are taxed at a higher rate than other forms of homeownership in New York City.

We passed legislation last year that would allow co-op owners to apply for reverse mortgages, but the Governor vetoed it. I will keep working on this legislation, which contains several important protections to prevent seniors from being taken advantage of by predatory lenders (as too often happens with reverse mortgages).

The New York City Property Tax Commission is proposing to reclassify co-ops in the same category as single-family homes and condos. This is something for which I have long advocated.

Owning a home should be encouraged and facilitated by New York. In order to do this, we need to treat co-ops fairly under the law.

## More Money for Outer Borough Buses

When the Chairman of the MTA met with me last spring to lobby for congestion pricing, one of the things I identified as an important need in the 81st Assembly District was more money for outer borough buses. I was told that if the state authorized congestion pricing in New York City to help fund the MTA's capital needs, then the MTA would dedicate more money to outer borough bus service.

Unfortunately, the Bronx Bus Network Redesign is being done from a cost neutral perspective. This is unacceptable. The MTA needs to live up to their promise and invest in our buses. In order to improve bus service and reduce our dependence on cars, we need to invest money in more frequent service, more bus stop shelters, and longer service spans.

The MTA is holding a Public Hearing for the Bronx Bus Redesign on February 20, 2020. You can speak up for more funding for buses at that hearing, or you can also submit feedback online at [mta.info/bronxbusredesign](https://mta.info/bronxbusredesign).



### NEW BOARD FOR WAKEFIELD TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

I had the privilege of swearing in a new board for the Wakefield Taxpayers Association this year. This longtime institution serving the Wakefield community (homeowners and tenants alike) generally meets on the third Thursday of each month.

## Preferential Rents: Explained

One of the most significant changes to protect rent stabilized tenants that we made last year is to guarantee preferential rents for the entire duration of a tenancy. This means that if you have a preferential rent (i.e. if you are a rent stabilized tenant and are paying a rent that is less than the legal registered rent), then you have a legal right to pay only the Rent Guidelines Board-approved rent increases for as long as you continue to live there. If your landlord sends you a lease renewal offer with a higher than expected rent increase, give my office a call and we can help you take a look to see if you potentially have rights to a lower renewal offer: 718-796-5345.



### SHOWING OFF THE 81st ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



It was wonderful to show Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul around the best Assembly District in New York State while she was in the Bronx for her localized State of the State address at Montefiore Hospital. We stopped by Riverdale Senior Services and had some great conversations about scam calls and other important problems!

## Satellite Office Hours in Norwood

Every Thursday morning  
(10 a.m. - 12 p.m. or by appointment)

**Mosholu Montefiore Community Center**  
3450 DeKalb Avenue (corner of East Gun Hill Road)

Walk-Ins welcome (bring photo ID for building security desk)

Accessible by Bx10, Bx16, Bx28, Bx30, Bx34, Bx38, 4 Train to Mosholu Parkway, D Train to Norwood - 205 Street

Email [DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov](mailto:DinowitzJ@nyassembly.gov) or call my office at 718-796-5345 to schedule an appointment or for more information.

# ALBANY RUNDOWN

## Fighting to Improve Access-A-Ride

It is no secret that New York City can be a difficult place to get around if you have a disability. Fewer than a quarter of our subway stations are fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (although we are making good progress on that with elevators slated to come to West 242nd Street and Mosholu Parkway stations on the 1 and 4 lines). Buses often require walking up several stairs, fighting for a seat, or walking out into the street to board.

Access-A-Ride, the paratransit service provided by the MTA for New York City, is notoriously inefficient. Drivers often arrive late and take circuitous routes, delaying their passengers. Users have to reserve a ride 24-48 hours in advance. It was welcome news when the MTA announced a new on-demand pilot program for 1,200 New Yorkers with disabilities to allow them to make a reservation just as easily as reserving an Uber, Lyft, or Curb.

The pilot program was so popular, in fact, that the MTA decided they need to restrict costs by capping fares at \$15 per ride and rationing the number of trips per month to only 16. This moves us in the wrong direction, and I have introduced legislation in Albany which would prevent these restrictions. The current pilot program, without trip rations or fare caps, is working very well. People have described it as life-changing.

The bottom line is that everyone, regardless of ability, has a right to travel around our city efficiently, safely, and affordably. We need an Access-A-Ride on-demand expansion that accomplishes this goal.

## Utilities for the People

Some of you may recall my longtime fight to bring a Utility Consumer Advocate to New York State. Over 40 other states have a similar office to advocate specifically for residential utility consumers during things like rate hike hearings, and consumers in those states have saved billions of dollars.

But that should just be the start. It should be a given that our state has a dedicated advocate for people like us to fight against rate hikes (such as the massive one that Con Edison customers just received). Last year, both houses passed my bill to create a Consumer Advocates Office, but the Governor vetoed it without an acceptable justification.

There is also a growing effort to fundamentally change how our utility companies are controlled. Right now, they are controlled by private corporations that essentially operate a monopoly on energy in any given region. This means that a significant amount of the hard-earned money that we pay each month goes to generate profits, not power. This means that we have no say in whether utility providers use our money to fund expansions of renewable energy or fossil fuels.

Power is as much of a basic need as housing, healthcare, and education. It's time that we have utilities that reflect people like us, not profits that go to Wall Street investors.

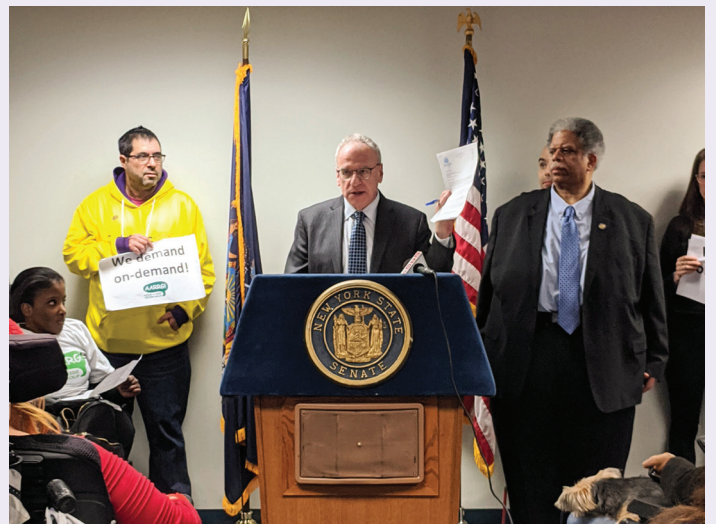
## NOTICE: Plastic Bag Ban Begins March 1

Say goodbye to plastic bags littering our trees, sidewalks, storm drains, and rivers! Starting on March 1 of this year, New York City will significantly restrict the use of plastic bags and New York City will impose a 5-cent surcharge for paper bags. Exempt from the plastic bag ban are those used for uncooked meat or produce, newspapers, trash and food storage, garments, carryout from a restaurant, and prescription drugs. Any fees for paper bags must be listed separately on your receipt (like the bottle deposit charges are now). Forty percent of the revenue collected from the paper bag fee will be dedicated to the purchasing/distribution of reusable bags (prioritizing low- and fixed-income communities) and the remainder will be dedicated to the state environmental protection fund.

## Better Transit: Capital Parity for Metro-North & Access-A-Ride & Defending MTA Lockbox



Transit is the lifeblood of New York City, and I have been fighting alongside my colleagues, advocates, and community members to make sure we are getting tangible improvements for the people of the 81st Assembly District. Pictured above: a) Calling attention to unmet capital needs for Metro-North alongside many Assembly colleagues from the Bronx and Hudson Valley, led by Assemblymember Amy Paulin, who chairs the Assembly committee with oversight of the MTA; b) Announcing new legislation to expand a wildly popular on-demand Access-A-Ride pilot program without any fare caps or trip rations alongside State Senator Leroy Comrie, who carries this bill in his chamber; c) Defending the Transit Lockbox legislation I passed in 2018 and calling for investment in Bronx buses alongside Assembly colleagues and advocates.



# SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

These are issues that are expected to be particularly relevant during 2020. If you would like more information on any topic, please feel free to contact my office.

Room for two respondents per mailer. If you prefer to respond electronically or have more than two registered voters in your household, please visit <https://nyassembly.gov/mem/Jeffrey-Dinowitz/story/90897>

Mail Survey to District Office • 3107 Kingsbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY 10463

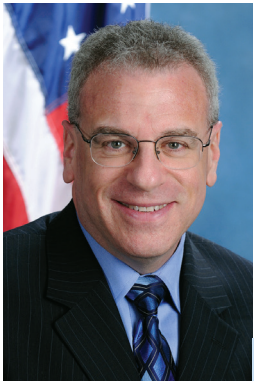
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- Do you think older inmates in jail should be eligible for parole at 55 years of age on the sole basis of their age?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you think New York City Department of Education should continue to offer Gifted & Talented programming?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you think New York City should continue using the Specialized High School Admissions Test as the sole basis of admission for the eight specialized high schools already using it?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you support universal healthcare for New York State?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you support Safer Consumption Spaces for opioids in New York?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you think landlords should be legally required to offer to sell their property to existing tenants before a third party has the opportunity to purchase it?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you support converting existing travel or parking lanes to dedicated bus lanes in order to improve bus service?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
- Do you support the legalization of cannabis in New York State?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided
  - Yes
  - No
  - Undecided

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 3107 Kingsbridge Avenue • Bronx, NY 10463

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## Assemblyman **Jeffrey Dinowitz**

Winter 2020

*“Este noticiario está disponible en español en nuestro sitio Web o en nuestra oficina.”*



### HEALTHY TERMINALS ACT TO SUPPORT AIRPORT WORKERS

All workers deserve livable wages and decent working conditions. I am proud to support the Healthy Terminals Act being advocated for by 32BJ SEIU, which would address concerns of tens of thousands of workers who are employed in places like our region's airports. Pictured with colleagues and Assembly bill sponsor Alicia Hyndman.



### TIME TO RENEW IDNYC

If you got your IDNYC card five or more years ago, it's time to renew! I hosted a weeklong on-site renewal event along with State Senator Alessandra Biaggi, Council Member Andrew Cohen, Kingsbridge Library, and NYC Office of Immigrant Affairs.



### SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS

Pictured with United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew as we prepare to once again fight for the fulfillment of our Foundation Aid obligations to schools in places like the Bronx. Bronx public schools are currently owed hundreds of millions of dollars following a successful lawsuit arguing that low-income school districts are being underserved by the current school funding formula.