

State Senator Daniel Squadron's

Community Update

2013



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DANIEL SQUADRON
 SENATOR, 26TH DISTRICT

THE SENATE
 STATE OF NEW YORK

RANKING MEMBER
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 & COMMISSIONS
 FINANCE
 INVESTIGATIONS AND
 GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
 SOCIAL SERVICES
 TRANSPORTATION

Dear Participant,

Every spring, I host a Community Convention so that my bosses -- you, and the other residents of our Senate District -- can let me know how I'm doing and directly shape my priorities for the coming year. We also continue the conversation every fall at these town hall meetings where I report on our progress, so you can be sure that your ideas and concerns are being heard.

On the following pages, you'll find updates from me on the many issues and ideas that were brought up at our spring Community Convention -- from education to emergency preparedness, and everything in between.

It really is the ideas from constituents like you that have shaped so much of what I've done. And, hopefully, these accomplishments and progress have helped show that, at its best, local government can make a real difference in our lives.

Nothing makes me prouder than working with you to make it a little easier -- and nicer -- to live, work, and raise a family here. While I am proud of these accomplishments, I also know that none of them would have happened if they hadn't started from the community and moved forward together.

I want to thank you deeply for the opportunity to serve the district. I know how busy life can be, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to make your voice heard. It makes all the difference for our community, our city, and our state.

Thank you,

Daniel Squadron
 New York State Senator
 26th District

Arts and Culture

The Arts and Culture discussion group was moderated by Benjamin Solotaire, with participants raising important issues in relation to keeping New York City the cultural capital of the country.

“We need our politicians to really push arts and culture. New York is not New York without it.”

Issues Raised:

- Ensuring financial and institutional support for non-profits and cultural groups
- Supporting art institutions through elected officials and community engagement
- Preserving libraries

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Fought for arts and creative groups when operating costs have threatened closure:
 - When the White Wave Young Soon Kim Dance Company was threatened with a crippling utility shut down in 2012, Senator Squadron negotiated with ConEd to create a viable payment plan.
 - Senator Squadron provided critical support to 3-Legged Dog, an innovative media and theater group based in Lower Manhattan, leading to an increase in earned income of 1415% over the last three years and real stability.
- Achieved an 'A' voting record from New Yorkers for Better Libraries in 2012:
 - Voted to support libraries in the Senate, and working with members of the community to ensure that any plans for library improvements actually improve users' experience.
 - Senator Squadron has been deeply opposed to cuts to library funding, which put our libraries in crisis. It is simply unacceptable to sell or shrink libraries for profit.
- Funded and secured interim space on Pier 42, along with Senator Schumer, creating an entirely new public space for art and creativity on the Lower East Side:
 - Senator Squadron secured open space for a series of art and educational installations on the pier in partnership with community groups.
 - Since opening, events from fishing clinics to kite festivals have drawn thousands of people to Pier 42.

Crime Prevention and Public Safety

The Crime Prevention and Public Safety discussion group was moderated by Dominic Berg, and participants raised issues from reforming stop-and-frisk to increasing protections for victims of domestic violence.

“More police participation and more children’s activities.”

Issues Raised:

- Reforming stop-and-frisk
- Increasing police participation in community activities
- Improving safety on streets and in large housing developments around the city
- Supporting and protecting victims of domestic violence

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Successfully passed legislation that increased penalties for repeat domestic violence offenders:
 - The legislation, passed in 2012 was dedicated to fallen NYPD Officer Alain Schaberger, who was killed responding to a domestic violence call in Senator Squadron’s district, by an abuser with a 12-year history of offenses. The new law will provide families with more protections, dignity, and support.
- Fighting to reform stop-and-frisk and the inconsistently enforced in-plain-view marijuana statute:
 - Senator Squadron is continuing to work with a statewide coalition of elected leaders and progressive advocacy organizations -- including the Drug Policy Alliance, Make The Road New York, and Vocal NY -- to push his that would decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana in public view.
 - Senator Squadron supported, and is continuing to monitor, two important changes at the City-level: the NYPD Inspector General, which will provide much needed objective accountability to policing in the city, and legislation to end racial profiling.
- Senator Squadron wrote the assault weapons ban that became law as part of the NY SAFE Act, strengthening gun control laws throughout the state:
 - Worked with the Violence Policy Center and New Yorkers Against Gun Violence to make New York’s assault weapon ban one of the strongest in the country.
 - Senator Squadron is continuing to fight in Albany to pass legislation that strengthens gun laws, including the vital crime-fighting tool of microstamping.
- Senator Squadron is urging NYCHA to implement the recommendations of “Protecting NYCHA Communities,” a report he wrote with Assemblymember Brian Kavanaugh and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer. The report showed that residents often fear for their safety and that housing developments lack basic protections, including functional locks for buildings, reliable intercom systems, and regular security patrols.

Education: Pre-K to College

The Education discussion group was moderated by Josh Levin and a large group of parents participated, raising issues such as keeping PS150 open, increasing parental involvement in education, and improving how the Department of Education (DOE) engages with the community.

“The proposed closing of PS 150 will not solve the downtown overcrowding problem.”

Issues Raised:

- Tackling school overcrowding
- Increasing funding for early childhood education, after school education, and college preparation programs
- Improving the DOE’s community engagement processes
- Keeping Lower Manhattan’s PS150 open

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Senator Squadron fought for increased education funding in the State budget and pushed back against proposed cuts.
- Worked with parents to secure and protect good public schools, including:
 - Preventing PS 150 from being moved, keeping vital school seats in Lower Manhattan.
 - Collaborating with the principal, parents, and the DOE to ensure the success of the newly created middle school at PS 8 in Downtown Brooklyn.
 - Continuing to push for more school seats in Lower Manhattan.
- Senator Squadron has been fighting to reform Community Education Councils:
 - Senator Squadron has long championed changes to the CEC structure – proposing to model them after New York City Community Boards, giving a stronger role to parents.

Emergency Preparedness

The Emergency Preparedness discussion group was moderated by Rami Metal and, in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, was well-attended, with participants keen to discuss issues from future preparedness to emergency communication.

“...neighbors need to help neighbors...”

Issues Raised:

- Improving citywide communication
- Enhancing evacuation procedures for the elderly and disabled
- Maintaining and improving our transportation system
- Increasing Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Senator Squadron coordinated hundreds of volunteers, delivering food, water, and blankets to families and ensuring vulnerable populations in affected areas were safe after Sandy.
- Created an online emergency information hub, utilizing social media, email, and phone to effectively communicate with constituents after the storm.
- Secured increased disaster food stamps for additional affected communities on the Lower East Side and Chinatown.
- Senator Squadron held multiple resource fairs for impacted businesses, residents, and community groups, bringing together government agencies, non-profits, and community leaders to provide knowledge and practical assistance.
- Worked with the City’s Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) process, shaping recommendations and supporting their implementation.
- Senator Squadron facilitated legal workshops to provide free legal services to local small businesses in need.
- Senator Squadron built a coalition of elected and community leaders in support of an expansion of the area in Lower Manhattan covered by the New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program – a statewide program that will provide additional rebuilding and reconstruction assistance to communities severely impacted by Sandy.
- Continues to participate in the Lower East Side Long Term Recovery Group.

Environmental Sustainability, Parks, and Open Spaces

The Environmental Sustainability, Parks, and Open Spaces discussion group was moderated by Hannah Friedman and brought together a broad range of participants with concerns related to hydrofracking and specific open space issues in the city.

“People need to be aware that open spaces are available.”

Issues Raised

- Increasing funding for parks
- Creating sustainable open spaces
- Using abandoned and vacant land to create more public open space
- Opposing hydrofracking

Related Squadron Initiatives

- Senator Squadron secured critical funding with Senator Schumer for completion of the city’s newest park on Pier 42 on the Lower East Side:
 - He worked with the Parks Department and community organizations to provide interim space for the community to use until the park opens permanently.
- Senator Squadron has brought together a strong citywide coalition of leaders in support of his proposal to create a Neighborhood Parks Alliance:
 - Legislation written by Senator Squadron would bring more equity to parks funding and ensure that large, well-funded conservancies contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of smaller, less well-funded parks – so that every community has access to open space.
- Senator Squadron negotiated to secure the future of Hudson River Park without allowing housing development in the park:
 - Stood for sustainable revenue streams without giving up parkland for residential use.
- Senator Squadron has worked to secure and expand amenities and infrastructure in parks across the city:
 - Senator Squadron has ensured that Brooklyn Bridge Park continues to add additional active recreation, including by securing the swimming pool that opened in 2012.
 - Senator Squadron provided key support to Bushwick Inlet Park’s recent facilities expansion.
- Senator Squadron has been a leader in the fight for a statewide fracking ban.

Housing: Mitchell-Lama, Rent Regulation, Tenant Rights, Section 8, and Public Housing

The Housing discussion groups were moderated by David Garza and David Gruber and dealt with the vital issues of affordability and the challenges facing public housing residents.

“Meet with the public with [development] ideas ... before rather than after they come to fruition.”

Issues Raised:

- Increasing affordable housing for low and middle-income New Yorkers
- Creating sustainable development projects and building smart
- Improving safety in public housing developments

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Senator Squadron wrote and passed legislation, recently signed by the Governor, to expand the Mitchell-Lama affordable housing program to more families:
 - Senator Squadron’s new law will make the Mitchell-Lama Housing Program more accessible to more families by making all families that earn 125% of the area median income -- not just those with dependents -- eligible.
- Senator Squadron has fought for a true community process when NYCHA proposes development plans, and he opposes the current proposal for luxury developments on NYCHA properties.
- Senator Squadron has fought to improve NYCHA residents’ quality of life:
 - He established a new, improved process for fixing gas outages in developments.
 - He ensured that increases in parking costs for NYCHA residents remain reasonable.
 - He is making sure that NYCHA prioritizes disaster preparedness in future planning.
- Senator Squadron is fighting to improve NYCHA’s governing structure:
 - He negotiated with the City to increase tenant representation on the NYCHA board, the first reform of NYCHA governance in decades.
- Senator Squadron is fighting to protect rent regulated housing and increase affordability:
 - Pushing to pass his legislation that would require City Council confirmation of the Mayor’s appointees to the Rent Guidelines Board and broadening qualification for membership to create necessary accountability, ensure a variety of voices are represented on the board, and better protect the affordability that has made New York the vibrant and diverse city it is today.

Seniors, Social Services, and Health Care

The Seniors, Social Services, and Health Care discussion groups were moderated by Gigi Li and Catherine Zinnel and brought together participants from across the social services and healthcare spectrum, raising important issues in relation to the threatened closure of Long Island College Hospital (LICH) and how to protect vital services for vulnerable populations.

“Immigrant [communities] have services available to them but they are not aware, they’re too scared to get help...”

Issues Raised:

- Protecting senior centers and food programs
- Keeping Long Island College Hospital (LICH) open
- Increasing funding for youth and family programs
- Improving access to services for minority communities

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Senator Squadron successfully fought against threatened cuts to vital funding for senior centers:
 - He worked with elected officials and the community to ensure that the Eileen Dugan Senior Center remains open and serving seniors in the Brooklyn community.
- Senator Squadron has been a leader in the fight to keep LICH open:
 - He worked with nurses and caregivers, community members, colleagues, including Public Advocate and Mayor-Elect de Blasio, 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, and the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) to keep LICH open for care.
- Senator Squadron has secured and expanded funding for social services programs:
 - He successfully advocated for the first-ever state funding stream for Nurse Family Partnership, a proven program that matches low-income first-time mothers with registered nurses for home visits throughout pregnancy until the child is two-years-old.
 - He secured stabilized funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program.
 - He is pushing back against changes to Early Intervention programming that would insert insurance providers into the process of evaluation of need and diagnosis of required service for young people.
 - He increased funding for the Disability Advocacy Program.

Transportation

The Transportation discussion group was moderated by Rob Perris, and the large number of participants raised a diverse range of issues from public transportation to street safety.

“DOT officials should visit other cities to see how their transportation systems work.”

Issues Raised:

- Improving traffic safety on streets
- Funding MTA and mass transit
- Increasing bus services
- Implementing congestion pricing

Related Squadron Initiatives:

- Senator Squadron has been a leader in the fight to make our streets safer:
 - Co-sponsored important legislation passed in Albany that allows speed camera pilot programs near schools around the city.
 - Working to strengthen Hayley and Diego’s Law, which he passed with Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh and which increases penalties for careless driving.
 - Ensuring that the important work of the Delancey Street Safety Working Group he convened continues, and that the recommendations continue to be implemented. The safety improvements already made on Delancey Street came directly out of the working group.
- Senator Squadron has secured key subway service improvements:
 - Worked with the MTA to create the first-ever Full Line Reviews, leading to significant improvements on the F, L, and G trains.
 - The MTA is now implementing Full Line Reviews to improve subway and bus service across the system.
- Senator Squadron worked to improve bus service:
 - Senator Squadron worked to secure the new Tech Triangle Bus route (B67) between Downtown Brooklyn, DUMBO, and the Navy Yard, and the new Williamsburg Waterfront route (B32), providing much needed transportation services to the growing communities they serve.
- Senator Squadron passed legislation in Albany to create the first-ever intercity bus permitting system, which will improve safety and quality of life for residents throughout the city.

Contact me!

My district office is open weekdays
from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm,
and I can always be reached at
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