



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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NY Daily News: N.Y. can fight back against flooding

SHELLEY MAYER AND CATALINA CRUZ September 30, 2023

Yesterday, inches of rain and extreme flooding brought communities in New York City and the Hudson Valley to a halt. This month [is on track to be the second wettest September in New York City history](#), following a summer where flash floods in New York and across the country claimed lives, destroyed property, and upended communities.

New Yorkers know long-term devastation of flooding all too well. Friday's downpour closed roads and public transportation, and flooded homes and businesses, resulting in untoward financial hardship, reminiscent of the damage caused by Hurricane Ida just a few years ago. In the days and weeks after the remnants of Ida swept through New York, we met with countless homeowners, renters, and small business owners impacted by the storm.

Ida claimed five lives in Westchester and 13 lives in New York City — many of whom drowned in their own homes. Thousands were left homeless, and even more faced significant damage to their homes, businesses, and cars. For months, constituents called our offices desperate for help as they learned that their insurance would not cover repairs and struggled to access money from FEMA.

Even now, in 2023, we still hear from constituents trying to get reimbursed for the costs of rebuilding. Gov. Hochul's strong leadership over the last few days helped us prepare as effectively as possible, but more must be done moving forward.

As we experienced yesterday and with Ida, rising sea levels and more extreme weather caused by climate change have increased the risk of flooding. [Risk Factor](#) reports that 14,173 properties in Northwestern Queens have greater than a 26% chance of being severely affected by flooding over the next 30 years, representing 24% of all properties in Northwestern Queens. 34,094 properties in Westchester face similar risks.

According to the [Department of Environmental Conservation](#), the northeastern U.S. experienced more than a 70% increase in heavy precipitation from 1958 to 2010, greater than any other region in the country.

We are urging the governor to create an executive office — the Office of Flooding Prevention and Mitigation. We've introduced legislation ([S3335/A132](#)) to create an office tasked with coordinating existing state work on flooding, supporting municipalities in their efforts to prevent and mitigate flooding, and researching flooding impacts and mitigation. It would also assess the areas of the state and populations at greatest risk, identify the best current emerging practices in flood management and preparedness, and make recommendations to help develop a high-level strategy for addressing flooding in our state.

We've both spearheaded legislation to address flooding in our communities. Last fall, the governor signed into law Sen. Mayer's [bill](#) to update the uniform building code to mitigate flood risk and improve resiliency in FEMA-designated special flood hazard areas and moderate risk flood hazard areas. Last week, she signed [legislation](#) sponsored by Sen. Mayer and Assemblymember Steve Otis to require the Department of Environmental Conservation to encourage the use of nature-based solutions for shoreline management that reduce flooding and erosion, and strengthen resilience.

Assemblymember Cruz sponsors the [Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Act](#), which would establish a local sales tax exemption for emergency supplies, and the [Community Disaster and Recovery Act](#), which would establish an emergency assistance program for undocumented individuals impacted by a natural disaster.

Despite some of our legislative achievements, we have still more to do. The governor's designation of the Division of Housing and Community Renewal as the flood leader is a start — but we can do more. New York is set to invest more than a billion dollars in flood risk protection and restoration projects as part of the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act in the coming years.

We have countless other programs on the state and federal level to help communities upgrade infrastructure and mitigate flooding risk. The new office would help to connect our local communities with relevant branches of the state and federal government and serve as a clearinghouse for information related to flood prevention and mitigation and available funding opportunities. The office would serve as a needed coordinator between levels and units of government.

As yesterday's floods reminded us, water doesn't know federal, state and local boundaries — and this office will bring all levels of our government together to solve these challenges.

Climate change poses an existential threat to our communities. As we work hard in New York to reduce our emissions and work to limit global warming, we also must be honest about the monumental task ahead to build resiliency and ensure New York can withstand the next flood. The Office of Flooding Prevention and Mitigation would provide the high-level of coordination and planning needed for the work ahead.

Mayer is a state senator from Westchester. Cruz is an assemblymember from Queens.

Read the article here: <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/09/30/n-y-can-fight-back-against-flooding/>