



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senator Martins Meets 'Town Hall-Style' With Sewanhaka High School Students

JACK M. MARTINS May 26, 2011

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Senator Jack M. Martins was hosted by over 100 hundred students in a "Town Hall"-style listen session at Sewanhaka High School. The forum was an outgrowth of a social studies assignment in the class of Diane Ondris where students wrote hundreds of letters to the Senator on issues of the day. Senator Martins replied to the questions and mailed each student a letter with a response.

In recognition of the school's outstanding work, Senator Martins came to Sewanhaka High School, where Elmont, Stewart Manor, South Floral Park and Floral Park students got to ask questions to their State Senator.

Senator Martins was greeted at Sewanhaka by Principal Debbi Lidowsky, Assistant Principals Paul Narraine and Nichole Williams and teacher Diane Ondris. After a quick discussion about the school and a tour, the "Town Hall" meeting began in the historic Sewanhaka High School auditorium. Ms. Ondris, the social studies teacher, opened the forum with an introduction of the Senator and a biography of his public service.

Soon after, the floor was open for students to ask questions to Senator Martins in a free flowing discussion. Questions ranged from the life of an elected official to important community issues like school aid, community development, college aspirations, taxes, world events and creating jobs in the greater community.

Senator Martins has held several listen sessions throughout the 7th Senate District. During the meetings, a question and answer period takes place. After the formal meeting, constituents are free to discuss community issues, concerns and ideas with the Senator one on one. Locally, Senator Martins has held listen sessions in Floral Park, Elmont, South Floral Park, New Hyde Park, Manhasset, Great Neck, Port Washington, New Cassel and Westbury.

"This was a great session where I was able to get a very unique perspective from our next generation of leaders. We were able to focus on issues and questions our young people are thinking about today. They expressed their hopes, dreams and future of their neighborhoods," said Senator Martins. "I was very impressed with their enthusiasm in making a difference for their community."

The hour-long session had Senator Martins walking up down the aisles taking questions from students, listening to their concerns and Senator Martins, in turn, challenging the students on their ideas. One area of discussion that elicited great interest was the impact of quality education. Students shared with Senator Martins that, in many cases, they would be the first generation in their respective families to attend college.

“Sewanhaka High School is a rich mix of cultures that has produced a truly inspiring mosaic of young people. I really enjoyed our young people’s questions and passion they brought to the listen session,” Senator Martins said.