



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Gianaris, Simotas, Vallone Hold Anti-Crime Rally in Astoria

MICHAEL GIANARIS November 16, 2011

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Local leaders protest recent area crimes and introduce initiatives to make the neighborhood safer.

Queens, NY – Senator Michael Gianaris, Assemblymember Aravella Simotas and Council Member Peter Vallone, Jr. today held an anti-crime rally to protest the concentrated number of criminal activities that have occurred in the neighborhood recently. The elected officials, as well as community leaders and activists, also announced new crime-fighting initiatives to increase safety in the neighborhood.

Local representatives responded to incidents of groping, the most recent of which occurred at Broadway and 31st Street; inappropriate touching of a young girl by an unknown man at the Steinway Library; car vandalism and robbery; and attempted rape on 21st Street.

Senator Gianaris is introducing legislation that expands the “Good Samaritan” laws so they pertain to local businesses and non-profits acting as safe havens to individuals who feel at risk or victimized. The measure would not hold organizations offering themselves as safe havens liable for damages or injuries that may have occurred while helping a victim.

“We must do everything in our power to combat the recent uncharacteristic crime wave in our community,” Senator Gianaris said. “Protecting small businesses that rush to aid someone in distress will increase the safe havens available to crime victims and make our

streets safer."

Assemblymember Simotas commended the Astoria community for taking a united stand against crime in the neighborhood, and announced that she is introducing new legislation to increase sentences for certain sex crimes and close legal loopholes that allow sex offenders to avoid facing serious penalties. She specifically singled out the law against "persistent sexual abuse," which automatically charges criminals with a felony if they are convicted of two or more misdemeanor sex crimes within a decade, but allows those violators to count time spent in jail towards the 10-year period.

"Astoria is one of the best neighborhoods in New York to raise a family, and we will not allow a few deplorable individuals – especially those who prey on women and children – to threaten that," Assemblymember Simotas said. "It's important that we use every resource at our disposal, including passing tougher laws, to send a message that we will not tolerate these types of acts in our community and criminals will be held accountable."

Council Member Vallone, who chairs the Public Safety Committee, will host a meeting on Thursday, November 17th to discuss the need to bring back neighborhood watch programs to Astoria as a way to engage citizens and assist the NYPD in crime surveillance efforts. Local community leaders and members of the 114th precinct are expected to attend. The meeting is open to the public and will be held at Quontic Bank at 31-05 Broadway starting at 7PM.

"With fewer police officers patrolling our neighborhoods and a decreasing uniformed headcount, it's more important than ever for our citizens to form neighborhood watch programs and work with existing public safety groups like the 114th Civ-Op," Council Member Vallone said. "I invite everyone to come out tomorrow night and learn how to become more involved."

Following an incident in September in which a young girl was inappropriately touched by an unknown man, the three elected officials worked together to introduce a bill that protects children from predators. The legislation establishes the crime of “forcible touching of a child” less than 13 years of age as a Class E felony punishable by up to four years in prison.

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