



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Senator Klein Launches Bronx Senior Center “Listening Tour” and Affordability Survey

JEFFREY D. KLEIN February 20, 2015

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*As part of 2015 IDC “Invest New York” Agenda, Klein Pushes Critical Programs & Policies to Support New York’s Seniors*

*New Survey Gauges Most-Pressing Financial Issues Facing Seniors Today*

**RIVERDALE, NY** - Senate Independent Democratic Conference Leader **State Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester)**, joined by **Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz (D-Bronx)**, today announced a month-long tour of Bronx senior centers at the Riverdale Y Senior Center in the Bronx. In order to fully gauge the financial hardships facing elderly New Yorkers, Senator Klein also announced the IDC’s Senior Affordability Survey -- [www.IDCInvestNY.com](http://www.IDCInvestNY.com) -- which will enable residents throughout the state to document their challenges in meeting the rising costs of homeowner expenses, property taxes, maintenance, utility bills, and other living expenses.

**Senator Klein said:** “New York’s seniors make up the very foundation of this state and as such it is our duty to ensure they have the necessary resources and supports to live out their golden years with dignity, comfort and ease. As legislators, we have a fundamental responsibility to the generations that have come before us to support their health and well-being, financial security and long-term stability. Now is the time to invest in our seniors and create a framework that will reduce living costs and provide real-time relief. I encourage seniors across New York to take our Senior Affordability Survey, so that we can begin to turn

the tide and bring greater prosperity and independence to those in retirement.”

**Assemblyman Dinowitz said:** “Many of our seniors living on fixed incomes struggle to make ends meet in the face of rising housing and utility costs. That’s why I have authored legislation to create a statewide Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate, which would represent the interests of residential utility customers, saving New York ratepayers millions of dollars annually in reduced utility costs. I am pleased that this proposal is a top priority of the IDC and an integral component of their *Invest NY* Senior Platform.”

After the visit to the Riverdale Y, Senator Klein traveled to JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center to visit with local seniors and discuss the IDC’s comprehensive 2015 Invest NY Senior Agenda. The IDC’s plan aims to make life more affordable for all seniors and works to address the fundamental disconnect between the current cost of living and long-term financial stability for older adults.

**Key proposals include:**

- Senior Housing Development Fund

One of the ways the IDC believes it can protect seniors is by making critical investments in new senior housing developments. New York’s housing stock happens to also be the oldest in the nation and many older New Yorkers are subsequently left with outdated housing that needs to be improved or updated. A Senior Housing Development Fund, would provide the necessary capital funding in the form of grants to developers looking to build housing restricted to individuals over 62 years of age.

- NORC Program Expansions

As more seniors choose to age in place rather than relocate to retirement communities, the state must continue to address the phenomenon of Naturally Occurring Retirement

Communities (NORC), allowing elderly residents to stay in their own homes. As such the IDC proposes an expansion of the NORC Program by allocating an additional \$5 million annually.

- REPAIR 2015 Program

For those seniors who wish to remain in their homes, the costs of repairs and home improvements can be daunting. In order to address this dilemma, the IDC proposes REPAIR 2015, which would create a tax credit of up to \$7,500 available directly to seniors for repairs to their home that would improve their health and safety.

- Senior Utility Circuit Breaker

In order to address this crushing costs of utility expenses, the IDC proposes a senior utility circuit breaker that would provide a senior household with relief equal to half of their expenses above the seven percent threshold. Covered expenses would include electricity charges, gas, heating charges, water and sewer charges, internet as well as telephone charges.

- Utility Consumer Advocate

The IDC calls for the creation of an independent statewide Utility Consumer Advocate charged with ensuring that the public, including our struggling seniors, receives the consideration it deserves from New York's utility-rate-setting bodies. This would ensure there is an independent voice at the table when regulated utilities ask for a rate increase.

- Department of Motor Vehicles Discount

Finally, the IDC calls for a senior discount related to costs associated at the Department of Motor Vehicles when individuals register their vehicles with the DMV and then re-register the car on a regular eight-year cycle. The proposal equates to a 10% discount to senior

citizens at least 65 years of age for their transactions with the DMV.

"With the new senior affordability survey launched today by Senator Klein, local seniors in Kingsbridge and Riverdale will have a chance to make their voices heard and the opportunity to openly discuss their most-pressing issues. We thank Senator Klein for his commitment to older adults and appreciate his visit to the JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center today," **said Lucy Degidon, Advisory Council President/JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center.**