



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

## August-September 2009 Community Report

THOMAS K. DUANE September 29, 2009

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Dear Neighbor:

The following is a summary of some of my office's activities since my last community report:

#### **Albany Update**

I am pleased to report that on September 16, Governor Paterson signed into law three important bills that I sponsored in the Senate:

The Department of Health (DOH) HIV/Hepatitis C Oversight bill directs that Department to oversee treatment of these diseases in our state and local correctional facilities, where healthcare is currently overseen by the New York State Department of Correctional Services. Nearly 300,000 people cycle through our prisons and jails each year and now the facilities that care for those individuals with HIV and Hepatitis C will have the same mandatory, independent assessments by DOH as all other public health facilities located in New York

State. Ultimately all healthcare provided in correctional facilities should be overseen by DOH and I continue to advance legislation that would mandate just that.

The Nursing Care Quality Protection Act requires healthcare facilities to disclose information about nurse staffing to state regulators and to the public. This bill is consistent with efforts across the country to increase transparency in health care delivery, allowing consumers to have more information to make prudent and informed decisions about their health care.

Finally, the New York City Biotechnology Tax Credit Authorization enables the City to give \$3 million in tax credits to biotechnology firms wishing to bring their jobs, innovation and new technology to the five boroughs. This legislation is expected to significantly boost New York City's standing as a center for innovative biotechnology companies and projects.

### **Sounding the Alarm on School Overcrowding in West Midtown**

On August 11, United States Congressman Jerry Nadler, New York State Assembly Members Richard Gottfried and Linda Rosenthal, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, New York City Council Member Gale Brewer, and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer joined me at a press conference announcing a report produced by my office showing that in 10 years, West Midtown may be home to over 1,000 elementary-school-aged children without school seats. Please see the [press release and report](#).

### **Planning for a School in Riverside South**

Last June, I joined U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and New York State Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal in sending a letter to New

York City School Construction Authority (SCA) and the New York City Department of Education (DOE) in support of CB7's request for a meeting to discuss the potential for a new public school in the proposed Riverside Center at West 61st Street. I am pleased to report that the agencies agreed and on August 26, I hosted a meeting with all the parties in my office. Thus far, Extell, which owns the site, has agreed to allocate space for an elementary school that would accommodate approximately 600 to 700 students. While there are many unanswered questions regarding this development site, I am confident that, together with the City, we will ensure that a new school is built in the early phases of construction and that it will significantly mitigate the severe overcrowding in Community School District 3.

## **Fighting to Preserve the Powerhouse**

Please see the [testimony](#) I submitted on July 14 to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in support of designating the 59th Street Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse as a landmark.

## **Opposing Old Law Tenement Variance Requests**

On September 22, I submitted [testimony](#) in opposition to an appeal by the owners of 514-516 East 6 Street to the New York City Board of Standards and Appeal (BSA) for ten variances to legalize the existing vertical extensions on the building. The BSA ruled last November that the extensions violated New York State's Multiple Dwelling Law (MDL). While this building is located outside of CB7, an approval of these variances would set a dangerous precedent and signal to old law tenement owners throughout the City that they may increase the height of their buildings without complying with the strict fire safety and egress requirements established in the MDL.

## **Calling for a Ban on Sight-seeing Helicopters**

On August 10, in response to the tragic collision over the Hudson River between a sight-seeing helicopter and a small private plane, I joined U.S. Representatives Jerry Nadler and Carolyn Maloney, New York State Assemblymember Dick Gottfried, New York City Council Gale Brewer and others at a press conference demanding that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulate New York City's airspace – particularly for helicopters – in order to prevent future accidents and relieve congestion. In addition, I reiterated my call for a complete ban on sight-seeing helicopters, which are noisy, dangerous and unnecessary. I pledge to continue my work with other elected officials, advocates, and government agencies to ensure the safety and regulation of our airspace..

## **Demanding that New York Protect its Troubled Youths**

On August 25, New York State Senators Velmanette Montgomery, Ruth Hassell-Thompson and Shirley Huntley joined me in announcing public hearings to ensure that the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) fully implements the changes to its youth detention facilities mandated by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). This call for action was the result of a damning DOJ report which outlined systemic physical and mental abuses at OCFS youth detention and residential facilities. Please see our [press release](#) for information about the DOJ's findings and relevant legislation that I am sponsoring the State Senate.

## **Hosting a Town Hall Meeting on the State of the NYS Senate**

As I announced in my recent district-wide newsletter, on September 1, I hosted a Town Hall meeting at The Duke on 42nd Street Theater to discuss the state of the New York State Senate and what is ahead in Albany and the 29th District. Nearly two hundred of my

constituents attended and asked questions about the need for reform in Albany, the prospects of passing crucial legislation and my position on a number of important issues.