



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jessica Ramos

Sen. Jessica Ramos Celebrates Ramadan With Free Halal Meals in Jackson Heights

JESSICA RAMOS May 23, 2020

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Jackson Heights, NY — Senator Jessica Ramos will distribute over 800 halal meals in Jackson Heights (69th Street & 37th Avenue) at 2:30 p.m. and at her district office today at 5 p.m. as hundreds of Muslim community members in Jackson Heights and nearby neighborhoods celebrate Eid-al-Fitr, one of the biggest holy festivals which marks the end of Ramadan. The hot meal distributions are two of three fresh food giveaways Ramos is hosting for families

and individuals struggling with hunger and food insecurity in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. She will distribute 40,000 pounds of New York State-sourced food to New Yorkers in need starting at 10 a.m. In a first for the district, Ramos is also partnering with NYC Census 2020 to offer linguistically and culturally appropriate on-site census completion capabilities to increase the self-response rate in the area. Photos from today's events will be added to a Google Drive folder ([click here](#)).

"While our communities have taken a blow in the wake of COVID-19, Queens residents have remained resilient thanks in part to our weekly food giveaways. Week after week, people show up and we will continue to show up for them if it means coming out of this crisis stronger than ever," said **Senator Jessica Ramos**. "As our Muslim neighbors celebrate the end of Ramadan and break their fast on Eid-al-Fitr, our priority is to provide halal meals for anyone who might be food insecure. Though this has not been an ordinary Ramadan, we are here to support our community as they observe this holy day. We are thankful to GrowNYC for providing meal boxes to deliver to our neighbors who can't make it in person and grateful for our continuing relationships with our NYS farms, the Street Vendor Project & our partners who help us keep feeding New Yorkers."

Ramos' food distribution is further bolstered by new partnerships with non-profit GrowNYC and New York City Census 2020. GrowNYC's new Emergency Fresh Food Box Program will allow Ramos to deliver boxes of regionally sourced, farm-fresh and nutrient-dense food to the homes of people who are physically unable to make it to the in-person distribution.

"Our work to provide all five boroughs with access to fresh and healthy food is more important now than ever, and we are proud to work with 'Food Czar' Kathryn Garcia on the Emergency Food Box Program, part of the City's 'Feeding New York' plan to get food in the hands of every New Yorker struggling due to the current health crisis," said **GrowNYC President and CEO Marcel Van Ooyen**. "We are grateful for leaders like Senator Ramos who

have teamed up with us on distributing these boxes, filled with fresh, nutritious food from New York farmers, and who recognize that the health of our amazing city is linked to the health of our regional food shed."

Given the critical importance of the census to the future of New York City, and especially to neighborhoods that have been the hardest hit by COVID-19, Ramos is partnering with NYC Census 2020 to provide on-site assistance with completing the questionnaire for residents in District 13, which has seen low rates of self-response. Currently, both the citywide and Queens averages are at 49%, with North Corona at approximately 33% and East Elmhurst at approximately 38%.

The census determines the allocation of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds annually for education, housing, transportation, job training, and critically, healthcare, and also determines the number of representatives New York has in Congress, where important decisions about COVID-19 recovery are being made every day. If undercounted, New York could lose up to two congressional seats following the 2020 Census, rendering a complete and accurate count critical to its future.

"From Ditmars Boulevard to Queens Boulevard, we're proud to be partnering with Senator Ramos to ensure that the future of our neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19 isn't further shortchanged by a lack of response to the census," said **Julie Menin, Director, NYC Census 2020 and Executive Assistant Corporation Counsel, NYC Law Department**. "We thank Senator Ramos for her tireless efforts to ensure that the people of her district are getting the food they need to survive during this unprecedented time, and to ensure that they are being counted in the census, which will determine New York City's recovery for years to come."

Over 3,000 hot meals will have been distributed to residents in Queens in the past four weeks thanks Ramos' partnership with Street Vendor Project (SVP). With most street vendors

unable to earn an income and ineligible for unemployment benefits, these small business owners have been critically hurt and unable to provide for their own families. Ramos' partnership with SVP ensures street vendors who provide meals for distribution also receive economic assistance.

Over 3,000 Queens residents will have been served following Ramos' giveaways today. Ongoing partners of Ramos' food program include farms from across New York that already have contributed over 140,000 pounds of fresh produce and milk; Northeast Dairy Producers Association; NY Corn and Soybean Growers Association; Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance; Food Bank of New York City and local food pantry Elmcors which used the State's new \$25 million Nourish New York program that allows food pantries to pay the farms; the Hispanic Federations Skanska which provides a forklift to move the pallets of food; Together We Can Community Resource Center; and the Jackson Heights, East Elmhurst and Woodside COVID-19 Care Neighbor Network Fund.

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